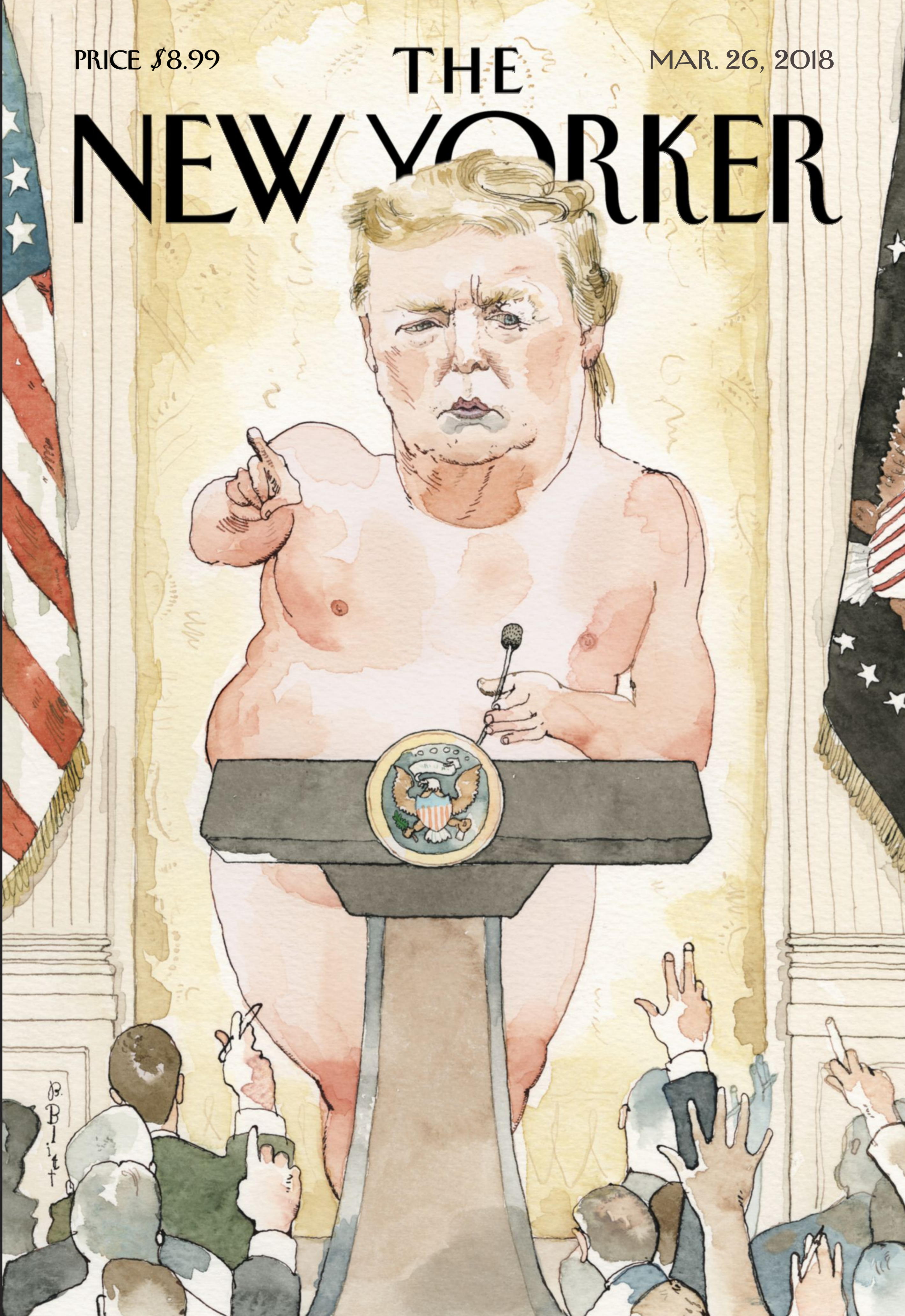
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PHOTO BOOTH
Hua Hsu writes about George Rodriguez's portrait of a Los Angeles divided.



VIDEO
Sharif Hamza discusses his photographs of young Americans and their guns.

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LEFT: PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE RODRIGUEZ/COURTESY HAT & BEARD PRESS; RIGHT: CRISTIANA COUCEIRO

THE MAIL

STRANGE GUESTS

I have zero interest in brown marmorated stinkbugs; in fact, I'd rather be entirely ignorant of them ("Home Invasion," March 12th). But, on reading the first few sentences of Kathryn Schulz's article about them, understanding what I was in for and wishing to avoid it at all costs . . . well, I simply could not tear myself away. That she was able to lure me in and keep me reading to the very end is proof of her spell-weaving ability.
Ken Horowitz
Stamford, Conn.

Each year, the number of stinkbugs invading my home grows. In the fall, there were thousands of them crawling on the back of my building, trying to get inside. The best way to deal with them is to drop them into soapy water. The addition of a drop or two of dish detergent will break the surface tension; the bug will sink just below the surface and drown quickly. I keep cups of water on every level of my home. Outside, I use a wide paintbrush to sweep them into a larger container of soapy water, thereby killing hundreds at a time. I won't squash them, but beyond that I show no mercy.

Reading Schulz's piece, I was reminded of the invasion of purple loosestrife, a magenta weed that was taking over all our wetlands and choking out many natural species. To combat the problem, beetles that dined on loosestrife were introduced. Now the weed is under control. How easily we forget biological catastrophe, and also biological solutions.
Dave Thompson
Ann Arbor, Mich.

As Mark Twain noted, "Nature knows no indecencies; man invents them." Schulz relies on the same highly militarized and villainizing language that's widely used to describe other so-called invasive species. These critters have arrived in their new homes not of their own agency but through careless (and sometimes intentional) handling by humans. Our breathtaking sense of exceptionalism insures that our errant ways in bringing pests from elsewhere is never our fault but somehow that of the organisms themselves. They are blamed for doing what all organisms do—attempt to reproduce and survive. As loathsome as they might smell, act, or be, they are not the villains in these environmental dislocations; we are.
Daniel Lewis
The Huntington Library
San Marino, Calif.

Forty-five years ago, for *The Atlantic*, I wrote "Wings of the Rhinoceros," an account of the campaign against the coconut rhinoceros beetle, an invasive species that was destroying coconut-palm plantations in Micronesia. My black beetle was colossal compared with the brown stinkbug, and had a huge horn on its head. But in both cases biological controls—where a natural enemy organism is introduced to counter the invader—turned out to be a useful tool, and the war between human and insect ended in stalemate. These stories are advisories on human hubris: the insects will survive us. Schulz makes one mistake, though, in suggesting that long bills evolved to reach nectar as a way around plant defenses. Long bills and nectar coevolved for their mutual benefit. The plant does not defend the nectar. It offers it.
Ken Brower
Berkeley, Calif.

What a disgusting story, brilliantly written: Stephen King meets Rachel Carson. Has anyone in the U.S. considered processing stinkbugs for food, as they are used in Southeast Asia, or for pharmaceuticals (cancer drugs? antibacterials?)? Cows eat our crops; we eat cows. Even rapeseed was toxic until crop breeders transformed it into canola.
David Waltner-Toews
Kitchener, Ont.

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



In the fourteen years since **"Mean Girls"** came out—introducing the world to such bons mots as "Stop trying to make 'fetch' happen"—the lives of teen-age girls have become only more fraught, with Snapchat chronicling every after-school power play. A musical adaptation, with songs by Jeff Richmond and Nell Benjamin and an updated script by Tina Fey, who wrote the enduringly witty 2004 screenplay, is in previews at the August Wilson, directed and choreographed by Casey Nicholaw. Will "fetch" finally happen?

PHOTOGRAPH BY ELIZABETH RENSTROM

MOVIES

NOW PLAYING

Annihilation
In this numbingly ludicrous science-fiction drama, written and directed by Alex Garland, a talented cast of actors play undeveloped characters delivering leaden dialogue in a haphazard story that's filmed with a bland slickness. Natalie Portman stars as Lena, a medical-school professor and former Army officer whose husband, Kane (Oscar Isaac), a soldier reported dead, turns up gravely ill. En route to a hospital, they are both spirited to a top-secret military facility, where Lena learns that Kane penetrated "the Shimmer," a strange rainbow curtain that surrounds a large seaside nature preserve, and she soon joins four other officers (Jennifer Jason Leigh, Tessa Thompson, Gina Rodriguez, and Tuva Novotny) on a mission to explore its mysteries. It involves aliens and heavy-duty gene splicing; the five women confront some conveniently contrived personal issues while facing attacks from a random batch of monsters. Near the end of the film, however, a few elements of design, such as crystalline trees, reveal some inspiration, and a grand conflagration suggests the proximity of the ridiculous to the sublime.—*Richard Brody (In wide release.)*

Carlito's Way
Embodied by Al Pacino with a rare melancholy dash, Carlito Brigante, going straight after five years in the joint, tries to run a disco and navigate New York's mean streets, circa 1975. Carlito is a blend of two archetypes: the aging gangster who dreams of escaping the city with his true love (a dancer-actress turned stripper, wanly played by a miscast Penelope Ann Miller), and the veteran Western gunslinger who ignores the threat of the young gun in town (a volatile, scary John Leguizamo). What makes the material feel fresh is Carlito's unpredictable chemistry with his lawyer, Davey Kleinfeld (Sean Penn). Carlito doesn't realize that the coke-addled Kleinfeld is as ruthless as any gangland enemy. Penn, with curled hair and wire-rims, makes a brilliant, slippery high-end shyster; his modulated hysteria is amazing. So is Brian De Palma's direction. Few films actually made in the disco era can match the kinetic allure of this 1993 production, which has a bluesy undertow all its own. De Palma's nerve-racking and elegant set pieces include a climax that suggests what Orson Welles could have done with a Steadicam.—*Michael Sragow (Quad Cinema, March 22, and streaming.)*

Claire's Camera
The South Korean director Hong Sang-soo condenses a grand melodrama of work, love, and art into a brisk sixty-nine-minute roundelay of chance meetings and intimate confrontations. It's set amid—and was actually filmed at—the 2016 Cannes Film Festival, where a young Korean woman named Jeon Manhee (Kim Min-hee) is fired from her job as a film-sales assistant after a one-night stand with a director named So Wansoo (Jung Jin-young), who, unbeknownst to her, is the boyfriend of her boss, Nam Yanghye (Chang Mi-hee). Stuck in Cannes with nothing to do, Manhee befriends Claire (Isabelle Huppert), a teacher from Paris, who's there as a tourist. Claire wanders around with her Polaroid camera, taking pictures of everyone she meets—including Wansoo and Yanghye—and unintentionally sparking uncomfortable reunions. Hong distills vast emotional crises and creative self-recognitions into confessional monologues, pugnacious discussions, and luminous aphorisms. His tightrope-long takes of scenes filmed in settings ranging from the picturesque to the banal (restaurants and apartments, café terraces, Mediterranean beaches) have an intricate dramatic construction, replete with glittering asides and wondrous coincidences, to rival that of a Hollywood classic. In English and Korean.—*R.B. (In limited release.)*

The Death of Stalin
A scurrilous farce from Armando Iannucci, the creator of "Veep." It is set in 1953, at a pivotal point in the Soviet Union; Stalin (Adrian McLoughlin) dies at his dacha, outside Moscow, and an unseemly tussle to succeed him gets under way. The pretenders range from the cautious but ambitious Khrushchev (Steve Buscemi) to the feebly fumbling Malenkov (Jeffrey Tambor) to, most pitiless of all, Beria (Simon Russell Beale), the head of the N.K.V.D. The movie looks on with scorn as these three, plus the rest of Stalin's inner circle, who have walked for so long in the shadow of fear, jostle for power and try not to make the wrong move. The language is profane, the history inaccurate, and the tone never less than derisive; even the state funeral is an occasion for little more than muttered conspiracy and slapstick. No wonder Iannucci's film has been banned in Russia. Yet the comic outrage seems to fit the madness of the times that he describes, and Beale's Beria, in particular, crawls from the blackness of the humor as a creature of genuine evil. With Michael Palin, as Molotov, and Jason Isaacs, majestically thuggish, as Marshal Zhukov.—*Anthony Lane (Reviewed in our issue of 3/19/18.) (In limited release.)*

Ismael's Ghosts
The director Arnaud Desplechin mines his earlier films and his cultural obsessions for a formidable trove of narrative complications, which he flings into the script with admirable abandon but without directorial audacity to match. His longtime alter ego, Mathieu Amalric, plays Ismael Vuillard, a fortysomething Paris-based director who's long been in mourning for his wife, Carlotta Bloom (Marion Cotillard), who vanished two decades ago. He is only now beginning a new relationship, with the astrophysicist Sylvia (Charlotte Gainsbourg), but, in a "Vertigo"-inspired twist, Carlotta suddenly shows up and wants to start over. There are also subplots involving Carlotta's father, Henri (László Szabó), a director who's a Jewish veteran of the French Resistance as well as Ismael's mentor, and Ismael's brother, Ivan (Louis Garrel), a diplomat, whom Ismael turns into the character of a spy in a new movie that he's struggling to finish. (Clips from the film-within-a-film are scattered throughout.) Desplechin's sense of style is merely illustrative—at its best, it's faux Truffaut. His storytelling engine is in overdrive, throwing off aphoristic sparks and melodramatic heat, but the film hardly gets moving until, finally, he meshes antic comedy, family passion, and mortal reckonings in a mad sprint to the finish line.—*R.B. (In limited release.)*

Modesty Blaise
This psychedelically inventive 1966 spy spoof, adapted from a British comic strip and directed by Joseph Losey, suggests the cinematic fireworks of an auteurist 007. The title character, played by Monica Vitti—the star of Michelangelo Antonioni's early-sixties masterworks—is an international secret agent who confounds powerful men with her charms and subjugates them with her intelligence. She's summoned by the British government to deliver to a Middle Eastern sheikh a shipment of diamonds that's sought by the arch-criminal Gabriel (Dirk Bogarde). Aided by her able sidekick, Willie Garvin (Terence Stamp), a working-class guy turned high-flying playboy, Modesty darts from Amsterdam (the site of some dazzlingly intricate aquatic plots) and London (in full sixties swing) to the posh island lair that Gabriel shares with the stylishly bloodthirsty Clara Fothergill (Rossella Falk). The vertiginous camera moves, the glitzy fashions, and the giddily miniaturized weaponry match the derisive tone of cloak-and-dagger depravity, complete with a shocking execution and two blithe musical numbers. Losey captures with comedy the same chill of modernity beneath the Mediterranean sun that Antonioni captures with melodrama.—*R.B. (Metrograph, March 24.)*

Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House
This comedy, from 1948—in which a New York adman (Cary Grant) hauls his wife (Myrna Loy) and daughters from their cramped city apartment to a custom-built Connecticut roost and thereby turns his life upside down—is a scattershot catalogue of postwar civilization's middle-class discontents. The opening scenes, with their stickily intimate details of bathroom-sharing, set the tone for the film's investment in such big-ticket items as class and race relations, media politics, and shadow zones of untapped desire. Grant plays the part with a chirpy impulsiveness that contrasts uneasily with the acute, ironic voice of the narrator, Melvyn Douglas, who plays Blandings's best friend and Mrs. Blandings's former suitor. The story appropriately veers off into marital discord, bureaucratic anguish (building permits, hidden fees), and alienated intellect (advertising's vain agony), while a host of post-"Citizen Kane" devices, ranging from the novelistic to the cartoonish, point in the direction of the comic modernism of Jerry Lewis and Frank Tashlin. If the ingredients don't completely jell under H. C. Potter's direction, no matter: unlike the Spam-copycat product that Blandings ballyhoos, this lightly sweetened tale is still remarkably meaty.—*R.B. (MOMA, March 23, and streaming.)*

Red Sparrow
An everyday tale of a Russian ballerina who becomes a secret agent, using sex as her weapon of choice. Why the film is not entitled "The Nutcracker" is beyond comprehension. In the course of the story, adapted by Justin Haythe from the novel by Jason Matthews, some characters are required to remove their clothes, but, by way of compensation, they get to put on nice thick Russian accents. The heroine is Dominika Egorova (Jennifer Lawrence), who quits the Bolshoi with a broken leg and, on the advice of her uncle Vanya (Matthias Schoenaerts), enters a secluded school, where a fearsome teacher (Charlotte Rampling) trains young men and women to seduce for the motherland. Dominika is let loose on an American, Nate Nash (Joel Edgerton), who, far from being unsuspecting, sees exactly what game she is playing and sets about recruiting her as a spy for the C.I.A. The plot, though thorny, conceals few surprises, and Dominika, beautiful yet often blank, remains a cipher without quite deepening into an enigma. The director is Francis Lawrence, who seems curiously eager to crank up the physical unpleasantness, perhaps in the hope that we will mistake it for thrills. With Jeremy Irons.—*A.L. (3/12/18) (In wide release.)*

Roxanne Roxanne
This tough-minded, pain-streaked bio-pic about Lolita Shanté Gooden—who, as Roxanne Shanté,

became a leading rapper, in 1984, at the age of fourteen—is anchored by Chanté Adams's fierce yet wrenchingly vulnerable lead performance. The writer and director Michael Larnell's dramatization of Shanté's story is centered in her Queensbridge neighborhood, where, as a schoolgirl, she was already celebrated as the local rap champion. Her home life is shaken when her mother, Peggy (Nia Long), a hardworking disciplinarian, is bilked out of a down payment on a new home by her boyfriend (Curtiss Cook) and starts drinking. Meanwhile, a neighbor and d.j. (Kevin Phillips) records Shanté for fun and makes her famous overnight. Her career takes off, but she never sees the money; at the same time, Shanté gets involved with Cross (Mahershala Ali), a suave middle-aged drug dealer who treats her romantically—and then violently. Larnell gathers a wide cast of vital actors for a teeming series of incidents that veer quickly from the sentimental to the shattering. Though the movie offers little societal context, it resounds with revelations of brutal realms run by ruthless men and shows why she, like many women in show business, left her career too early.—*R.B. (In limited release and on Netflix.)*

12 Days
French law allows involuntary confinement in a mental institution for twelve days, after which a hearing must be held to authorize further hospitalization; each additional six-month term requires a new hearing. The documentarian Raymond Depardon filmed some of these hearings, at a hospital in Lyon. His visual parsing and editing-room distillation of the closed-door adversarial procedures—in which the patients and their lawyers, as well as a representative of the hospital, state their cases to a magistrate, who also has doctors' reports in hand—empathetically illuminate the troubles that the patients confront. But, even more, Depardon sees the hearing room as a distorting mirror for civic life at large. Some patients have been in conflict with the law, even for violent crimes. Some, however, appear merely to have fallen through the cracks of other systems, including employment, housing, and foster care; one woman is a victim of rape, whose torments remain unaddressed in the hearing. The mightiest conundrum involves a woman who demands to be released because she ardently wants to commit suicide and end her sufferings. Here, the movie leaps past practical politics into ultimate philosophical realms.—*R.B. (Anthology Film Archives.)*

A Wrinkle in Time
Ava DuVernay's direction of this adaptation of Madeleine L'Engle's classic novel captures the original work's sense of exhilaration and wonder, but the script (by Jennifer Lee and Jeff Stockwell) eliminates the book's most idiosyncratic aspects and intricate world-building. Storm Reid stars as Meg Murry, a tween who, with her little brother, Charles Wallace (Deric McCabe), and her friend Calvin (Levi Miller), goes on an intergalactic adventure in search of her father (Chris Pine), a scientist who has been missing for four years. Guided by three women with superpowers—Mrs. Whatsit (Reese Witherspoon), Mrs. Who (Mindy Kaling), and Mrs. Which (Oprah Winfrey)—the children face exotic creatures in strange new places and challenge colossal forces of evil. Above all, Meg learns to confront—and to derive strength from—her stifled pain. DuVernay highlights Reid's steadfast and masklike performance in intense closeups and realizes elements of fantasy with verve, purpose, and some giddily psychedelic imagery. Nonetheless, the story's emotional moments and delightful details only vaguely cohere. With Gugu Mbatha-Raw, as Meg and Charles Wallace's mother, also a scientist.—*R.B. (In wide release.)*

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera
A decade on, it's hard to understand all the hand-wringing about directorial intervention that greeted Mary Zimmerman's 2007 staging of **"Lucia di Lammermoor."** In revival, the production has proved itself to be a straightforward, if occasionally clumsy, account of Donizetti's opera, dressed up in attractive nineteenth-century costumes. This season, the skillful coloratura soprano Olga Peretyatko-Mariotti stars as Lucia, and Vittorio Grigolo is the volatile lover who drives her to insanity; Roberto Abbado conducts. *March 22 and March 26 at 7:30.* • With Franco Zeffirelli's production of "La Bohème" barely off the boards, the master entertainer's staging of another Puccini favorite, **"Turandot,"** sweeps in to take its place, conducted by Marco Armiliato, the dependable maestro who closed the "Bohème" run. He'll be pacing a creditable cast that includes Martina Serafin, Marcelo Álvarez, Guanqun Yu, and Alexander Tsymbalyuk. *March 21 at 7:30 and March 24 at 1.* • The final performance of Patrice Chéreau's absorbing modern production of Strauss's **"Elektra"** will be conducted by Paul Nadler, with Christine Goerke, a supreme exponent of the title role, leading a cast that also features Allison Oakes, Michaela Schuster, and Mikhail Petrenko. *March 23 at 8.* • Phelim McDermott, who triumphed at the house in 2008 with his production of Glass's "Satyagraha," is helming a new staging of **"Così Fan Tutte,"** which evokes, of all places, Coney Island in the nineteen-fifties. A troupe of carnival performers backs a cast that features Amanda Majeski, Serena Malfi, Ben Bliss, Adam Plachetka, and—as the scheming Don Alfonso and the maid, Despina—Christopher Maltman and Kelli O'Hara; David Robertson. *March 24 at 8 and March 27 at 7:30. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)*

New York City Opera: "Il Pigmalione" / "Pigmalion"
Pairing these one-act operas together not only allows audiences to hear how two great masters, Donizetti and Rameau, treated the same story from Greek myth but also gives the Donizetti piece—the composer's first opera—its long overdue New York première. Piotr Buszewski and Jessica Sandidge star in the first work, with Thor Arbjornsson and Melanie Long, among others, in the second; Gil Rose conducts. *March 24 at 3 and March 25 at 4. (Gerald W. Lynch Theatre, John Jay College. nycopera.com.)*

The English Concert: "Rinaldo"
Now that Handel's operas have reëntered the repertory, the thrill that accompanied their rediscovery has begun to subside. The conductor Harry Bicket and his esteemed early-music ensemble recapture some of that energy with their annual series of the composer's works at Carnegie Hall. The British countertenor Iestyn Davies, fresh from a Broadway run as the plangent singing voice of opera's most famous castrato in "Farinelli and the King," leads a cast that includes Jane Archibald, Joélle Harvey, Sasha Cooke, and Luca Pisaroni. *March 25 at 2. (212-247-7800.)*

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

Orpheus Chamber Orchestra
Two melodic masters—one sweet, the other tart—are highlighted in the conductorless chamber orchestra's latest program. From Schubert, there will be music for the play "Rosamunde," along with the "Unfinished" Symphony (No. 8); from Prokofiev, a suite of "Schubert Waltzes" (arranged by Paul Chihara) and the darkly neo-Romantic Violin Concerto No. 2 (with Lisa Batiashvili). *March 24 at 7. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)*

RECITALS

Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zukerman
Two violinists who need no introduction (with the second, of course, doubling on viola) team up at Carnegie Hall for a convivial night of music-making, assisted by the pianist Rohan De Silva. *March 22 at 8. (212-247-7800.)*

"Qyrq Qyx (Forty Girls)"
In a multimedia event conceived and assembled by the Uzbek film and video artist Saodat Ismailova, young Central Asian women present songs and stories from a male-dominated Turkic tradition; they recount the epic of Gulaim, a legendary teen-age heroine who defended her homeland from invaders with her band of forty women warriors. The live performances are accompanied by striking contemporary film sequences, directed by Ismailova, and a modern score by the admired Uzbek composer Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky. *March 23-24 at 7:30. (BAM Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. bam.org.)*

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center: Winter Festival Finale
The Society concludes its Winter Festival, which this year has been devoted to the pioneering influence of the Viennese violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh, who formed the first professional string quartet and supported the work of Beethoven and Schubert along the way. Two Schuppanzigh programs are reproduced: the first offering Schubert's Quartet in A Minor, D. 804 ("Rosamunde"), and Beethoven's Septet; the second featuring works by Haydn and Mozart, as well as Beethoven's Piano Trio in G Major, Op. 1, No. 2. The musicians include the pianist Gilbert Kalish and the Escher and Shanghai String Quartets. *March 23 and March 27 at 7:30. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788.)*

Le Poisson Rouge Presents
The boundary-bursting Greenwich Village music club ventures well beyond Bleecker Street to present two disparate events, linked by a common thread of new original chamber music infused with vernacular nuances. At Rockwood Concert Hall, on the Lower East Side, the adventurous brass quartet the Westerlies performs jazz-savvy works alongside the Attacca Quartet, an outstanding young string group. Meanwhile, at Murmrr Ballroom, in Prospect Heights, the pianist and composer David Moore leads his bespoke ensemble, Bing & Ruth, presenting his lush, cinematic strain of minimalism. *March 27 at 7; March 27 at 8. (For tickets and venue information, visit lpr.com.)*

NIGHT LIFE



On March 21-22, Justin Timberlake brings his "Man of the Woods" tour to Madison Square Garden.

ILLUSTRATION BY MVM

Into the Woods

Justin Timberlake explores his country side on his new release.

Recently, Justin Timberlake has caught a lot of flak for veering left onto a dirt road. "Man of the Woods," his fifth album, released in February, was announced as a return to his Tennessee roots, promising (and delivering) songs influenced by what he called "Southern American music." The record, along with its single, "Say Something," and Timberlake's new outdoorsman image, has been giddily mocked by critics and diehard J.T. fans alike. Many see it as a betrayal of his core audience, who have come to count on his knotty R. & B. pop: Justin's supposed to be love-stoned, not homesick.

"Man of the Woods" débuted strongly, but sales dropped dramatically in the second and third weeks, a reliable indicator of a dud. And Timberlake's country-wave concept hasn't found an easy slot in Spotify playlists or club sets. But his new direction isn't unprecedented. Timberlake's transition from boy-band front man to R. & B. star can be traced back to three singles: 'N Sync's "Gone," from the fall of 2001; a remix of "Girlfriend," the group's final single, released the following spring; and "Like I Love You," Timberlake's introduction as a solo artist, released in October, 2002. Across those three tracks, Timberlake fashioned a new sound with the Neptunes, the production duo of Pharrell Williams and Chad Hugo, shedding his pop-singer sheen for dirty drums, falsetto vocal runs, and, notably, guitar. All three singles feature central acoustic-guitar refrains that aren't too far from the country textures Timberlake is toying with today. It's possible that the singer's ear has been tuned to the sounds of his youth since the beginning.

Still, the low points on "Man of the Woods" sink deep. Songs like "Flannel" and "Wave" are inexcusably goofy: on the latter, Timberlake repeats "Now the other way!" eight times and calls it a chorus. "Say Something" is similarly half-baked, and, as an anthem for sitting out the discourse, it's hard to imagine that it will age well. But let the album roll on, and you might notice "The Hard Stuff," a slow-tumbling country love song worthy of its second-to-last track placement, or "Morning Light," a sharp old-school duet with Alicia Keys, on which the singers, who both turned thirty-seven in January, add some 808 bass to a grown-up, barroom-gospel arrangement.

Timberlake, who performs at Madison Square Garden March 21-22, says that his latest album was inspired by his first child, Silas, and by the experience of being a father and a husband. For musicians, new families often bring a warmth to their work, and an indifference to cool trends of the moment. Timberlake may have benched his "FutureSex" style with this latest creative turn, but at least he lost the suit and tie.

—*Matthew Trammell*

ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors lead complicated lives; it's advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.

Bodega Bamz
New York City hip-hop is known for producing vivid storytellers and big characters; the fashionable cluster of young artists that includes A$AP Mob, Flatbush Zombies, and Bodega Bamz aspired to the latter when they began breaking, around 2012. Bamz delivered his mixtape "Strictly 4 My P.A.P.I.Z." that year, a stab at booming trap influenced by his native Spanish Harlem. "At Close Range" was its best moment, a rare personal look into the rapper's backstory. Bodega Bamz is working on a new album, and plays a show at the Knitting Factory this week. *(361 Metropolitan Ave., Brooklyn. 347-529-6696. March 21.)*

Four Tet
For his seventh album, "Beautiful Rewind," from 2013, the electronic artist Kieran Hebden, who records and performs as Four Tet, took the concept of self-releasing to new heights, not only ditching his longtime label, Domino, but also snubbing any and all marketing tactics. "No pre order, no youtube trailers, no itunes stream, no spotify, no amazon deal, no charts, no bit coin deal, no last minute rick rubin," the Londoner tweeted. Since then, the laptop wizard has maintained his playful, no-frills style, merging jungle grooves with brainy beats, scuzzy samples, and rhapsodic synths to induce a psychedelic meltdown that begs for the dance floor. He settles in for a weeklong stay at National Sawdust. *(80 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. 646-779-8455. March 19-23.)*

Bobby Konders
This native Brooklynite's voice is recognizable throughout the city as the radio host and d.j. who brought reggae to mainstream airwaves. Konders has been ingrained in New York's reggae and dancehall scenes since the mid-eighties, starting a d.j.-and-production crew called Massive B Soundsystem and cutting records out of his Bedford-Stuyvesant apartment. He took to the air each Sunday night to play the latest dubs and interview reggae artists from the Caribbean and the U.K., and even found time to dabble in house music, producing the notorious "House Rhythms" EP in 1990. The local dancehall-and-electronic label Mixpak invites Konders to its March party series to play alongside residents **Dre Skull** and the **Large.** *(Black Flamingo, 168 Borinquen Pl., Brooklyn. rsvp.mixpakrecords.com. March 22.)*

MGMT
As the story goes, Ben Goldwasser and Andrew VanWyngarden were students at Wesleyan when they began twiddling with the pop form as MGMT. Their early hits "Kids," "Time to Pretend," and "Electric Feel" struck a chord in the first decade of the aughts, when self-released MP3s nudged the Zeitgeist for the first time. The model that MGMT set—glowing, addictive keyboard melodies, funk-fuelled drums and bass, psychedelic nostalgia—has since been rehashed by countless young aspirants. But nobody minds much, because the sound has earned its space. Few expect the band to top its début, and by all signs MGMT hasn't tried. But "Little Dark Age," its

fourth album, released in February, is sprinkled with four-on-the-floor beats and hands-in-the-air hooks. "When You Die" strikes a good balance between the band's early indie-pop efforts and its subsequent shaggy experiments—a happy-sad bop reminiscent of Bowie and the Beach Boys. MGMT, touring "Little Dark Age," plays three nights in the area, supported by **Matthew Dear.** *(Kings Theatre, 1027 Flatbush Ave., Brooklyn. 800-745-3000. March 24. Brooklyn Steel, 319 Frost St., Brooklyn. 888-929-7849. March 25-26.)*

Miguel
This Los Angeles native has been at it for nearly two decades, carving out his own career path in a scene filled with behind-the-curtain puppetry. It's never felt as though Miguel were competing with R. & B. mainstays like Chris Brown, Trey Songz, or even the Weeknd. Like Raphael Saadiq, or Prince, he manages to stay firmly within the vogue of the moment while operating completely outside the musical purview of his peers. "Sure Thing" and "All I Want Is You," his first and most traditional singles, still hold up. "Adorn," his most successful track to date, marked his evolution to more galactic textures, and the string of EPs he's issued since then are adventurous enough to shore up his core fan base and turn any naysayers away. Online tickets to this week's shows come with a copy of Miguel's new album, "War & Leisure"—another play from the book of Prince. *(Terminal 5, 610 W. 56th St. 212-582-6600. March 23. Brooklyn Steel, 319 Frost St., Brooklyn. 888-929-7849. March 24.)*

Moby
"As a life long progressive I'm supposed to be diplomatic and understanding," Moby wrote, in an open letter published in *Billboard* shortly after the 2016 election. "But America, what the fuck is wrong with you?" The iconic electronic producer took the results hard after a year of campaigning for Hillary Clinton. However, the trauma may have sparked him creatively; after leaping around various genres and projects, Moby has returned to the nimble, escapist trip-hop that made him famous. On his new album, "Everything Was Beautiful and Nothing Hurt," he faces the grief head on, and lightens its weight with crispy drum loops and choral trance vocals. His take on the standard "Like a Motherless Child" is as effortless as it is excellent. *(Rough Trade, 64 N. 9th St., Brooklyn. roughtradenyc.com. March 20-21.)*

Porches
In New York, there's a form of depression that's cured only by a long sulk around town. These aimless strolls demand a soundtrack by someone who's walked the same pavement—say, Arthur Russell's outsider melancholia on "World of Echo," or the more dejected corners of Lou Reed's solo œuvre. Porches, the brainchild of Aaron Maine, has joined this storied lineage. The depths of introspection in his downcast pop are softened by occasional nods to New York dance music. Such moments are frequent on his latest album, "The House," which is a must-play if you like crying in the club: expect morose ballads over giant house drums at this headliner with **Girl Ray** and **Palberta.** *(Music Hall of Williamsburg, 66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. 718-486-5400. March 23.)*

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Valerie Capers
Although she's played with icons ranging from Mongo Santamaria to Wynton Marsalis, this pianist and composer, blind since childhood, is best known for her voluminous educational career. Capers is an octogenarian demi-legend—she holds down a spot on the Bronx Walk of Fame, among other honors. She fronts a quartet at this engagement. *(Jazz at Kitano, 66 Park Ave., at 38th St. 212-885-7119. March 24.)*

Billy Childs
Having won the 2018 Grammy for Best Instrumental Jazz Album, the pianist Childs can place the award alongside his previous four. Although he broke into public view by way of his broad work with such luminaries as Freddie Hubbard and J. J. Johnson, Childs quickly sidestepped categorization as an intrepid hard bopper by investigating diverse hybrid projects, including classical composition and Laura Nyro covers. The most recent Grammy-winning album, "Rebirth," casts a fond glance back toward his small-group beginnings. *(Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. 212-576-2232. March 22-25.)*

Sheila Jordan and Cameron Brown
A singer meets a bassist and audacious jazz ensues. The eighty-nine-year-old Jordan has been turning vocal conventions on their heads since the early sixties; still, she remains a bebop baby whose core adoration for all things Charlie Parker runs deep and wide. Brown, a respected veteran stylist, has formed a rare and invigorating symbiosis with his occasional partner. *(Cornelia Street Café, 29 Cornelia St. 212-989-9319. March 21.)*

Bobby McFerrin
Few one-hit wonders ever struck gold quite like the vocal virtuoso McFerrin, whose "Don't Worry, Be Happy" reached No. 1 and scored Grammys for Record of the Year and Song of the Year. It's a good thing he could fall back on his talent. His most recent recording, "Spirityouall," from 2013, finds him interpreting faith-based and original work. *(Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St. 212-475-8592. March 23-April 1.)*

Bobby Watson
It's right and just that Watson currently teaches in Kansas City, Missouri: his robust and eminently soulful alto-saxophone stylings would have fit right in during its jazz heyday, early in the last century. On this visit, he'll be joined by the pianist **Stephen Scott,** as well as the drummer **Winard Harper** and the bassist **Essiet Essiet.** *(Smoke, 2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. 212-864-6662. March 23-25.)*

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Museum of Modern Art
"Stephen Shore"
This immersive and staggeringly charming retrospective is devoted to one of the best American photographers of the past half century. Shore has peers—Joel Meyerowitz, Joel Sternfeld, Richard Misrach, and, especially, William Eggleston—in a generation that, in the nineteen-seventies, stormed to eminence with color film, which art photographers had long disdained. His best-known series, "American Surfaces" and "Uncommon Places," are both from the seventies and were mostly made in rugged Western states. The pictures in these series share a quality of surprise: appearances surely unappreciated if even really noticed by anyone before—in rural Arizona, a phone booth next to a tall cactus, on which a crude sign ("GARAGE") is mounted, and, on a small-city street in Wisconsin, a movie marquee's neon wanly aglow, at twilight. A search for fresh astonishments has kept Shore peripatetic, on productive sojourns in Mexico, Scotland, Italy, Ukraine, and Israel. He has remained a vestigial Romantic, stopping in space and time to frame views that exert a peculiar tug on him. This framing is resolutely formalist: subjects composed laterally, from edge to edge, and in depth. There's never a "background." The most distant element is as considered as the nearest. But only when looking for it are you conscious of Shore's formal discipline, because it is as fluent as a language learned from birth. His best pictures at once arouse feelings and leave us alone to make what we will of them. He delivers truths, whether hard or easy, with something very like mercy. *Through May 28.*

Whitney Museum
"Grant Wood: American Gothic and Other Fables"
This retrospective of the Iowan painter fascinates as a plunge into certain deliriums of the United States in the nineteen-thirties, notably a culture war between cosmopolitan and nativist sensibilities. But any notion that Wood—who died in 1942, of pancreatic cancer, on the day before his fifty-first birthday—is an underrated artist fizzles. "American Gothic" is, by a very wide margin, his most effective picture (although "Dinner for Threshers," from 1934, a long, low, cutaway view of a farmhouse at harvesttime, might be his best). Wood was a strange man who made occasionally impressive, predominantly weird, sometimes god-awful art in thrall to a programmatic sense of mission: to exalt rural America in a manner adapted from Flemish Old Masters. "American Gothic"—starchy couple, triune pitchfork, churchy house, bubbly trees—succeeded, deserving the inevitable term "iconic" for its punch and tickling ambiguity. The work made Wood, at the onset of his maturity as an artist, a national celebrity, and the attendant pressures pretty well wrecked him. Why Wood now? A political factor might seem to be in play. Although the show was planned before the election of Donald Trump, it feels right on time, given the worries of urban liberals about the insurgent conservative truculence in what is often dismissed—with a disdain duly noted by citizens of the respective states—as flyover country. *Through June 10.*

New Museum
"2018 Triennial: Songs for Sabotage"
This show, co-curated by Alex Gartenfeld and Gary Carrion-Murayari, tethers fresh artists to stale palaver. The work of these twenty-six individuals and groups, ranging in age from twenty-five to thirty-five, from nineteen countries, is for the most part formally conservative (painting, weaving, ceramics). The framing discourse is boilerplate radical. The catalogue and verbose wall texts adduce abstract evils of "late capitalism" and (this one may be new to you) "late liberalism," which the artists are presumed to subvert. In principle, the aim reflects the museum's valuable policy of incubating upstart trends in contemporary art. But it comes off as willfully naïve. Nearly all the participants plainly hail from an international archipelago of art schools and hip scenes and have launched on normal career paths. Noting that they share political discontents, as the young tend to do, is easy. Harder, in the context, is registering their originalities as creators—like bumps under an ideological blanket. Two standouts are painters who evince independent streaks at odds with the ideal of collectivity that the curators promulgate. The Kenyan Chemu Ng'ok, who is based in South Africa, has developed a confidently ebullient Expressionism—faces and figures teeming laterally and in depth—in deep-toned, plangent colors. She's not propagandizing; she's painting. Even more impressive is the Haitian abstractionist Thomm El-Saieh, who lives in Miami. From a distance, his three large acrylic paintings suggest speckled veils of atmospheric color. Up close, they reveal thousands of tiny marks, blotches, and erasures, each discretely energetic and decisive. Grasping for their coherence is like trying to breathe underwater—which, to your pleasant surprise, as in a dream, you find that you can almost do. *Through May 27.*

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Dadamaino
The Italian artist, who was born Emilia Maino, in 1930 (she died in 2004), is often associated with the spatialism of Lucio Fontana, who was indeed a formative influence. But Dadamaino's monochromes, punctuated by cutouts, are more elliptical and less aggressive than Fontana's slashed canvases. Among the works in this invaluable overview are four transfixing examples of Dadamaino's "Volumes" (1958-60) and two perforated shower-curtain pieces from "Modular Out of Sync Volumes" (1960-61), in which multiple layers of plastic create enticing tensions of visual texture that double as sly epistemological jokes. In "The Facts of Life" (1977-81), featuring dozens of lists of runic symbols, which Dadamaino made in response to the Lebanese civil war, her studied ambiguity takes a political turn. *Through April 24. (Mendes Wood DM, 60 E. 66th St. 212-220-9943.)*

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

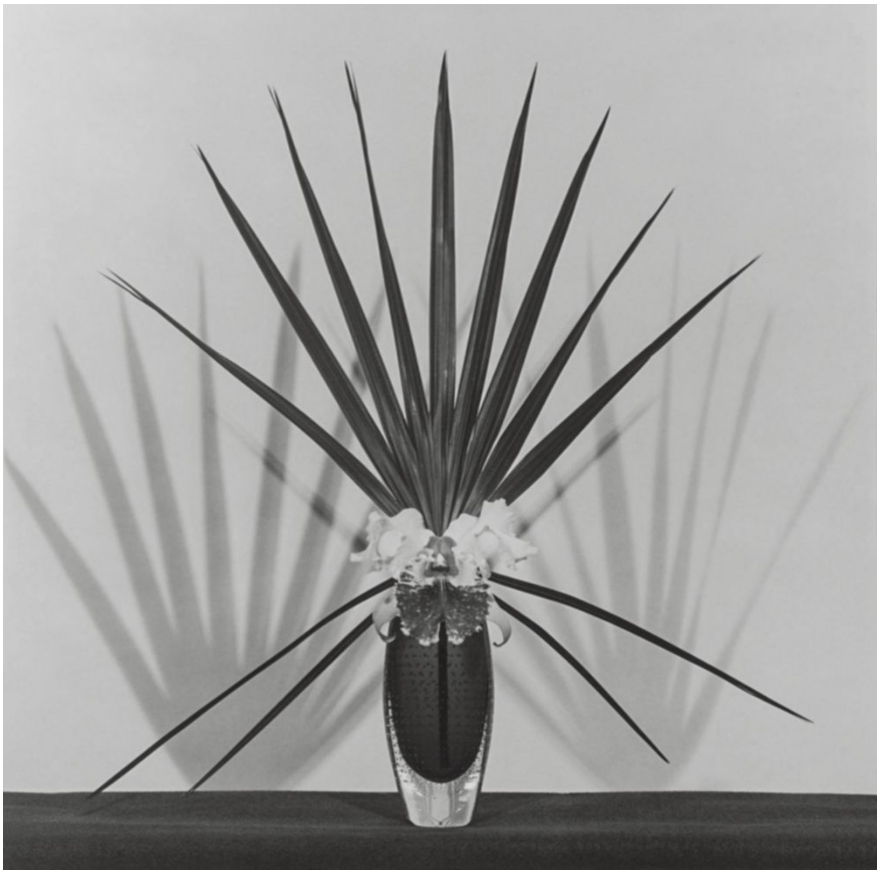
Barnaby Furnas
The mid-career Brooklyn-based painter tackles his angst, both aesthetic and political, by depicting echt American imagery with a custom-designed arsenal of technologically enhanced sprays, drips, and washes. "Mt. Rushmore," with its stained gray triangles under cloudy streaks of white, seems to be as much about the construction of a painting as it is about national monuments. But "The Rally," in which a generic Presidential figure behind a zigzagging podium waves to a sea of upraised hands while tiny fighter jets strafe his head, makes it clear that Furnas is deeply concerned with the messy spectacle of America now. *Through April 14. (Boesky, 509 W. 24th St. 212-680-9889.)*

Robert Gober
In the American sculptor's first New York solo show since his 2014 MOMA retrospective, an abundance of small works mine his familiar, if mysterious, themes. Barred windows and patches of forest (images that recall past installations) are nestled inside bare chests in a series of pencil drawings. Twenty wall-mounted assemblages are nursery-ready nods to Joseph Cornell, with green apples and blue robin's eggs suspended against cloth diapers and floral-patterned wallpaper. Gober's idiosyncratic lexicon, drawn, in part, from childhood memories, lends his work an eerie lyricism, whatever the medium or scale. The pathos of a little sunken cellar door near the start of the show—a foam-core-and-balsa-wood maquette for a sculpture first exhibited at the 2001 Venice Biennale—gives way to the near-mythic aura of its full-sized counterpart, which provides the show with its finale. *Through April 21. (Marks, 526 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200.)*

Oliver Laric
Despite the cartoonish friendliness of the young Austrian artist's drawn lines, there's an undeniable melancholy to his new video, "Yet to Be Titled," in which animals and people transform in a series of surreal vignettes. Two hairy male faces, made up of curving dashes, rearrange into monkeys; a teapot evolves into an ostrich; a marching phalanx of ants carries grasshopper legs and a tiny human embryo. This fantastical sequence seems to make a case for a transhumanist outlook, reinforced by three polyurethane sculptures of anthropomorphic dogs, each titled "Hundemensch." *Through April 14. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100.)*

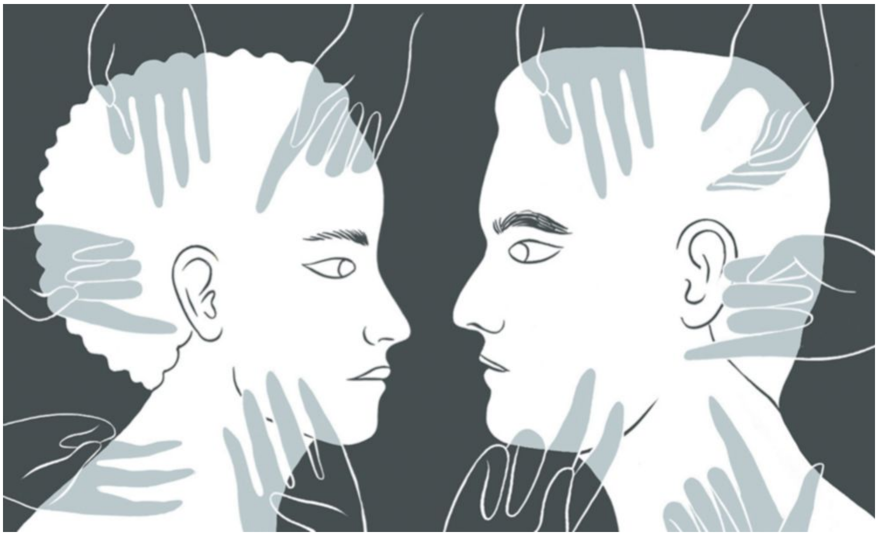
GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Elle Pérez
Nine enigmatic pictures by the New York photographer create a world of their own. "Nicole" is an intimate, dusky portrait of a young woman lying on a pink couch, her arms thrown above her head, glancing sideways at the camera as her reflection is mirrored in a glossy coffee table below. In "Stone Bloom," an expanse of dark rock is marked with rust-red splotches, echoing the blood-covered hand in "Dick," a neighboring cropped composition of tangled bare limbs. In her previous work, Pérez has focussed her lens on L.G.B.T. night clubs and an underground wrestling scene in the Bronx. This show, with its careful edit of subjects and moods, feels unified by more formal associations, and the effect is as powerful as ever. *Through April 8. (47 Canal, 291 Grand St. 646-415-7712.)*



"Orchid with Palmetto Leaf" (1982), by Robert Mapplethorpe, appears in an exhibition of the photographer's work curated by Roe Ethridge at the Gladstone gallery, on view through April 14.

THE THEATRE



Lauren Ridloff and Joshua Jackson star in Mark Medoff's romantic drama, at Studio 54.

The Sound of Silence

A deaf romance returns to Broadway in "Children of a Lesser God."

At this year's Oscars, Rachel Shenton and Chris Overton won the award for Best Live Action Short for their film "The Silent Child." Shenton, who plays a social worker teaching sign language to a deaf girl, signed her acceptance speech, keeping a promise she made to the film's six-year-old star. Shenton joins a distinguished club of Oscar winners who have signed their speeches. In 1976, Louise Fletcher (Nurse Ratched, in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest") signed a message to her deaf parents. Three years later, Jane Fonda, accepting for "Coming Home," signed in recognition of "the invisible handicapped." And, in 1987, Marlee Matlin signed her speech when she became the first deaf actor to win an Oscar, for her role in "Children of a Lesser God."

That movie was adapted from Mark Medoff's Tony Award-winning play, which premièred on Broadway in 1980. It tells the story of a teacher at a school for the deaf who meets a feisty young woman named Sarah—a former student who now works as a janitor and refuses to use her voice. Their romance is a study of love and difference, of how pity and paternalism can stifle true communication. Medoff wrote the part for Phyllis Frelich, a member of the National Theatre of the Deaf, which at that time had been operating for thirteen years, performing around the country and on Broadway. The company grew out of the hit play "The Miracle Worker," starring Patty Duke and Anne Bancroft as Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan. In more recent years, L.A.'s Deaf West Theatre has brought the musicals "Big River" and "Spring Awakening" to Broadway, with mixed casts of deaf and hearing actors. The New York Deaf Theatre is in its thirty-eighth season; its production of Jordan Harrison's "Maple and Vine" comes to the Flea in May.

This week, a revival of "Children of a Lesser God" begins previews at Studio 54, directed by Kenny Leon and starring Joshua Jackson and the thirty-nine-year-old deaf actress Lauren Ridloff, whom Leon originally hired to teach him A.S.L. (The production employs a "director of artistic sign language," to make sure the signing is as watchable as it is readable.) Ridloff, whose screen credits include Todd Haynes's "Wonderstruck," is making her stage début, continuing the fine tradition of theatre that breaks the sound barrier.

—*Michael Schulman*

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Feeding the Dragon
Sharon Washington wrote and performs this solo show, at Primary Stages, about growing up above a New York Public Library branch where her father worked as the custodian. *(Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 866-811-4111. In previews.)*

Frozen
Disney brings its hit film to the stage, with songs by Robert Lopez and Kristen Anderson-Lopez. Caissie Levy and Patti Murin play the sisters Elsa and Anna in Michael Grandage's production. *(St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 866-870-2717. In previews. Opens March 22.)*

Grand Hotel
Encores! presents a concert version of the Depression-era musical, which follows the intertwining lives of the guests at a ritzy Berlin hotel. *(City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. March 21-25.)*

Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, Parts One and Two
J. K. Rowling's tale picks up nineteen years after the novels end, in this play by Jack Thorne, staged by John Tiffany in two installments. *(Lyric, 214 W. 43rd St. 877-250-2929. In previews.)*

The Iceman Cometh
Denzel Washington stars in George C. Wolfe's revival of the Eugene O'Neill drama, set in a Greenwich Village saloon populated by dead-end dreamers. *(Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. Previews begin March 22.)*

Lobby Hero
Second Stage reopens its new Broadway home with Trip Cullman's revival of Kenneth Lonergan's 2001 play, about a murder investigation in a Manhattan apartment building, starring Michael Cera and Chris Evans. *(Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. In previews. Opens March 26.)*

Mlima's Tale
Lynn Nottage's new play, directed by Jo Bonney, traces the journey of an elephant (Sahr Ngaujah) stuck in the international ivory trade. *(Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Previews begin March 27.)*

Ms. Estrada
The Q Brothers Collective performs this hip-hop retelling of Aristophanes' "Lysistrata," reset on a college campus. Michelle Tattenbaum directs. *(Flea, 20 Thomas St. 212-226-0051. Previews begin March 22.)*

My Fair Lady
Lerner and Loewe's classic 1956 musical returns to Broadway, in a Lincoln Center Theatre revival directed by Bartlett Sher and starring Lauren Ambrose, Harry Hadden-Paton, and Diana Rigg. *(Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. In previews.)*

Rocktopia
Rob Evan and Randall Craig Fleischer created this multimedia concert, in which five vocalists and a symphony orchestra meld Mozart and Beethoven with the Who and Pink Floyd. *(Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. In previews. Opens March 27.)*

The Winter's Tale
Theatre for a New Audience presents Shakespeare's tale of jealousy and enchantment, directed by Arin

ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL LEVIT RUIZ

Arbus. *(Polonsky Shakespeare Center, 262 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 866-811-4111. In previews. Opens March 25.)*

Yerma
Simon Stone directs his modern-day adaptation of the Federico García Lorca drama, featuring Billie Piper in her Olivier-winning role from the Young Vic. *(Park Avenue Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. 212-933-5812. Previews begin March 23. Opens March 27.)*

NOW PLAYING

Admissions
One of the squirmiest plays of the season, Joshua Harmon's prickly comedy congratulates the liberal bona fides of its audience, then uses those same values to blackjack them. At a leafy boarding school in rural New Hampshire, the admissions director, Sherri (Jessica Hecht, typically excellent), and the headmaster, Bill (Andrew Garman), have successfully increased diversity. But when their own son, Charlie (Ben Edelman), is denied early admission to Yale, while his biracial best friend is accepted, the family has to reckon with what they're willing to sacrifice for their principles. (Spoiler: not much.) As Charlie says, "You're happy to make the world a better place, as long as it doesn't cost you anything." Under Daniel Aukin's polished direction, the structure is too pat and the characterizations too streamlined, but the play expertly indicts the people most likely to applaud it. *(Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)*

Black Light
The performer Daniel Alexander Jones's inspired creation Jomama Jones is in part an homage to the transformative power of black style. An American pop star who decamped, Tina Turner-like, for Europe, Jomama resides in bucolic splendor, with carefully tended goats and grounds. From time to time, though, when she knows that her country is in trouble—like now—she returns to the States with her mid-Atlantic accent to spread diva dust and sparkle. This ninety-minute spectacle, billed as "a musical revival for turbulent times," is a largely successful attempt to explain the unexplainable, including what it means to live without borders or jingoism. The show opens with some feel-good ambassador-of-love moments, but, once Jomama gets past her moralizing, she gathers us into her spangled arms and reaches her full height—aided, of course, by six-inch heels and an even taller pile of hair. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/12/18.) *(Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Through March 25.)*

Escape to Margaritaville
At first glance, you might mistake this Jimmy Buffett jukebox musical for the latest Snake Plissken adventure. But no: Margaritaville is a place to escape *to*, not from. The story is told through Buffett's yacht-rock œuvre, including "Cheeseburger in Paradise" and "Why Don't We Get Drunk," which prove surprisingly easy to shoehorn into a plot. At a Caribbean resort, Tully (Paul Alexander Nolan), a beach bum in sandals and a Hawaiian shirt, falls for Rachel (Alison Luff), an uptight vacationer from Cincinnati. Like Tully, the show just wants you to forget about work and relax, man. The director, Christopher Ashley ("Come from Away"), makes sure everything goes down smooth, and Greg Garcia and Mike O'Malley's book is all the more impressive when you realize that it's loosely based on "Anna Karenina." Kidding! Frozen margaritas are, naturally, available in the lobby. *(Marquis, Broadway at 46th St. 877-250-2929.)*

The Fall
Collectively devised by its cast (with Thando Mangcu and Kgomotso Khunoane), this South African docudrama revisits the 2015 campaign to take down a statue of the nineteenth-century imperialist Cecil J. Rhodes from the University of Cape Town's campus. Seven actors—all of whom took part in the protests—play students fired up by the fight for decolonization. Once their efforts succeed, however, the youthful activists face yet more issues—the problem of how to pay for their education, for instance, and rampant internal divisions. Confronted by the female participants about ingrained sexism, the men decry "white feminist theories"; a "colored" student (of mixed racial heritage) dresses down the black allies who do not take her hardships seriously. Clare Stopford's kinetic production, from Cape Town's Baxter Theatre Centre, integrates chants and *toyi-toyi* dancing, but the impassioned arguments have their own rhythm, pulsing and urgent. *(St. Ann's Warehouse, 45 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779. Through March 25.)*

Flight
Created by the Scottish company Vox Motus and based on a novel by Caroline Brothers, this unclassifiable experience narrates the attempt of two young brothers to escape from Kabul to London. The presentation is profoundly imaginative: each audience member sits in a private booth around a black carrousel that conveys a succession of hundreds of gorgeously designed miniature dioramas, which, in sequence, tell the story of the boys' two-year journey. Each vignette is a still-life, but an immersive soundtrack of dialogue, narration, music, and effects, delivered by headphones, fully animates the scenes. You could call it theatre, or art installation, or some mad hybrid of comic book, peepshow, and radio play; one spectator was overheard describing it as "analog virtual reality." No matter the name, it's unforgettable in both content and form, a devastating concatenation of dreams and nightmares on the run. *(The Heath at the McKittrick Hotel, 542 W. 27th St. 212-564-1662.)*

Good for Otto
For their third outing with the New Group, Ed Harris and Amy Madigan are merely two members of a fourteen-strong ensemble. Yet their scenes, separately and together, ground David Rabe's shaggy, likable new play. Set at a mental-health center in the Berkshires, the script is a loosely structured series of encounters among the therapists (Harris and Madigan), an insurance bureaucrat (Nancy Giles), and patients in various states of distress. Maulik Pancholy plays a high-strung gay man, while Rileigh McDonald is a scarily troubled tween. Some of the individual story lines, especially the one involving F. Murray Abraham's depressive retiree, overstay their welcome, but Rabe's description of a porous border between reality and fantasy, life and death is affecting. After much meandering, Scott Elliott's production lands back on its feet with a gentle, hopeful finale. *(Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)*

Later Life
In A. R. Gurney's bittersweet comedy, from 1993, a couple gets a mulligan. It may or may not be good news. After a brief encounter when they were young and available, Austin (Laurence Lau) and Ruth (Barbara Garrick) meet again at a party thirty years later. He is now a well-off, divorced banker, and his affability hides . . . not much, because Gurney does not fill in the blank that is Austin. As for Ruth, she eventually reveals that she has had many downs, but is she ready for a change? Most of the entertainment in this Keen Company production is generated by Liam Craig and Jodie Markell, as various intrusive party guests who keep causing flirtus interruptus. Their characters, including a rambunctious Southern couple and a computer geek, are quick sketches, but they are drawn with a verve that is lacking in the central pair. *(Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)*

Three Small Irish Masterpieces
This golden evening, titled with not a whit of blarney, is made up of one-acts written by three founders of Dublin's Abbey Theatre. "The Pot of Broth," by William Butler Yeats (in collaboration with Lady Gregory), illustrates a deep con orchestrated by a tramp (David O'Hara) trying to cadge a dinner from a miserly woman (Clare O'Malley). "The Rising of the Moon," by Lady Gregory, depicts a fraught dockside encounter between a police sergeant (Colin Lane) and a ragged man (Adam Petherbridge). And John Millington Synge's "Riders to the Sea" is a powerful, keening portrayal of sacrifice made by a mother (Terry Donnelly) and her daughters (O'Malley and Jennifer McVey). All three plays were written in the first decade of the twentieth century, but, as movingly directed by Charlotte Moore—and shot through with song—they feel even older: folkloric, ancient, mythic. *(Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)*

Three Wise Guys
This adaptation of a couple of Damon Runyon tales, cleverly put together by Scott Alan Evans (who directs) and Jeffrey Couchman, is the final production of the Actors Company Theatre, providing a funny, sweet, and thoroughly charming farewell after twenty-five years. The voices here are unalloyed, cartoon New York, with a "Guys and Dolls" locution that earns laughs as much from sentence structure as from the jokes themselves. Karl Kenzler, Joel Jones, and Jeffrey C. Hawkins play Blondy, the Dutchman, and Dancing Dan, who run afoul of the powerful bootlegger Heine Schmitz (John Plumpis) on Christmas Eve, 1932. Evans employs a wide range of theatrical techniques, including nifty shadow puppetry devised by Andy Gaukel. In Runyon's universe, unlawful activities are mitigated by a deep but grudging moral code. And his characters, like all good gangsters, occasionally break out into impeccable barbershop harmonies. *(Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)*

ALSO NOTABLE

The Amateurs Vineyard. • **Amy and the Orphans** Laura Pels. • **Angels in America** Neil Simon. • **Bright Colors and Bold Patterns** SoHo Playhouse. • **Carousel** Imperial. • **Edward Albee's At Home at the Zoo: Homelife & The Zoo Story** Pershing Square Signature Center. *Through March 25*. • **Farinelli and the King** Belasco. *Through March 25*. • **Hangmen** Atlantic Theatre Company. *Through March 25*. • **In the Body of the World** City Center Stage I. *Through March 25*. • **Is God Is** SoHo Rep. • **Jerry Springer—The Opera** Pershing Square Signature Center. • **Kings** Public. • **The Low Road** Public. • **Mean Girls** August Wilson. • **Once on This Island** Circle in the Square. • **queens** Claire Tow. *Through March 25*. • **Three Tall Women** Golden.

DANCE

Stephen Petronio Company
For several seasons, Petronio has been tracing his influences by having his lithe company perform pieces by his predecessors. It's a self-serving project with rewards for everyone: respectable revivals of neglected gems. The latest is Merce Cunningham's "Signals" (1970), a heady work with an air of secret magic; the dancers' positioning is partly unfixed, determined by cues they give one another. Also on the program is the première of Petronio's "Hardness 10," a diamond-inspired piece with a slow-moving score by Nico Muhly and—always key to the Petronio aesthetic—costumes by a fashion designer, Patricia Field. *(Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. March 20-25.)*

Juilliard Dance / "Spring Dances"
Every spring, Juilliard's dance conservatory takes on a trio of major works from the modern/contemporary repertories, and this year's lineup is especially exciting. The students will perform one of Merce Cunningham's most heart-stopping pieces, "Sounddance": seventeen minutes of pure energy and movement. Twyla Tharp's "Deuce Coupe" is a great introduction to the choreographer's sly blend of Americana—shimmies, shadowboxing, the music of the Beach Boys—and ballet technique. Both are emblematic works that came out of New York in the seventies. The triple bill is brought into the twenty-first century by the inclusion of Crystal Pite's "Grace Engine." *(Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 212-769-7406. March 21-24.)*

Paul Taylor American Modern Dance
The company's final week at Lincoln Center offers a few last opportunities to catch Taylor classics like "Eventide" (set to the rhapsodic "Suite for Viola and Orchestra," by Ralph Vaughan Williams) and "Musical Offering" (set to Bach), plus two works created this season for the company: Doug Varone's "Half Life" and Bryan Arias's "The Beauty in Gray." There will be guest performances, by New York City Ballet's Sara Mearns, in a medley of dances by the early-twentieth-century pioneer Isadora Duncan, and by the Trisha Brown Dance Company, in Brown's cool tour de force "Set and Reset," featuring silvery costumes by Robert Rauschenberg. *(David H. Koch, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. March 21-25.)*

Anna Sperber
Sperber's formalism can be dutiful and lacking in urgency, but not when her aggressive streak kicks in. So there's something promising in the setup for "Wealth from the Salt Seas," which has the choreographer whipping weighty electrical cables into waves. It sounds like a badass ribbon dance. The composer and experimental vocalist Gelsey Bell is on hand to help make powerful vibrations. *(The Chocolate Factory, 5-49 49th Ave., Long Island City. 866-811-4111. March 21-24. Through March 31.)*

Dancing Platform Praying Grounds
This spring's Platform at Danspace Project, curated by Reggie Wilson, focusses on the intersections of dance, race, religion, and architecture. It finishes with the début of Wilson's own ". . . They Stood Shaking While Others Began to Shout," which builds from his surprise in discovering that a black Shaker sect existed in the nineteenth century. Like most of Wilson's works, it's about many things and one thing (the African diaspora), and it's rich in irresistible song. *(St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. March 22-24.)*

Urban Bush Women
Good hair, bad hair—who's to say which is which? "Hair and Other Stories" takes on the issue and its politics through song, dance, and cartoonish sketches, mostly from an African-American perspective. For this presentation, which closes out the Harkness Dance Festival, the well-loved troupe invites audience members to contribute their own hair stories. *(92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. March 23-24.)*

"A Celebration of Arnie Zane"
Before his death, in 1988, Zane was half of a famous dance duo—in the opinion of some, the better half. The dance company that he created with Bill T. Jones now has a home at New York Live Arts, and that's where the thirtieth anniversary of Zane's death, which is also the seventieth anniversary of his birth, is being commemorated with an all-day event. Much of the schedule is composed of workshops in Zane's choreography and the techniques that influenced him, but it concludes with a selection of performances and stories about the artist, directed by Jones and featuring members of the company. *(219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. March 25.)*

"Works & Process" / Reid Bartelme and Harriet Jung
The designers Bartelme and Jung have achieved near-ubiquity in the world of New York dance, creating costumes for ballet, modern, and avant-garde productions. For this event, five choreographers—including Pam Tanowitz, Jack Ferver, and Lar Lubovitch—present short works, a few of them custom-made for the evening, and all clothed by Bartelme and Jung, whose shared aesthetic is minimalist, ironic, and playful. The two designers will also perform—Bartelme was a member of BalletMet and Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, and Jung has danced both Korean traditional dance and hip-hop. Afterward, the choreographers and the designers will join in a conversation about the role of costuming in dance. *(Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3575. March 25-26.)*

ABOVE & BEYOND



Macy's Flower Show
The annual two-week exhibition—featuring ornate, aromatic displays of flora from around the country, at the Herald Square flagship store—is a welcome sign of spring's arrival. This year's theme is "Once Upon a Springtime," which draws on the mythical, soft-focus forestry of wonderlands and fairy-tale kingdoms. On March 25, the Flower Show hosts the floral designer Rachel Cho, who will teach attendees how to make flower crowns, the traditional Slavic headwear originally designated for young unmarried women that has become a ubiquitous accessory for Coachella-bound, carefree twentysomethings. One highlight is a special floral demonstration by Martha Stewart on April 5, as the mogul celebrates her ninetieth book, "Martha's Flowers." *(151 W. 34th St. 212-695-4400. March 25-April 8.)*

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Asia Week continues with a flurry of sales and talks devoted to Asian art at auction houses and galleries all over town. **Christie's** rolls out Indian, Himalayan, and Southeast Asian art on March 21, with modern and contemporary works in the morning and classical pieces in the afternoon. The latter sale includes a dramatic eleventh-century sculpted panel, or stela, depicting the warrior goddess Durga slaying a buffalo-shaped demon. Chinese ceramics follow, in a trio of sales on March 22-23; one of these sessions, devoted to items from a Japanese collection specializing in Song-dynasty pieces, includes a striking tenth-century cream-colored plum-shaped vase, or *meiping*, decorated with elegantly stylized black fish and underwater foliage. *(20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)* • A large selection of Chinese pieces—including bronzes, furniture, sculptures, and ceramics—goes under the gavel on March 21 at **Sotheby's.** This auction is followed by three the next day, including one featuring the collection of a Nobel laureate, Richard R. Ernst, and his wife, Magdalena. The eighty-eight-lot sale consists mainly of Nepali and Tibetan religious paintings (*paubhas* and *thangkas*, respectively) populated by row upon row of heavenly spirits. Another collection offered on March 22, of Chinese paintings and calligraphic texts, is from the holdings of a California family closely associated with the twentieth-century Chinese painter Zhang Daqian. *(York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)*

ILLUSTRATION BY PABLO AMARGO

FOOD & DRINK



PHOTOGRAPH BY COLE WILSON FOR THE NEW YORKER; ILLUSTRATION BY JOOST SWARTE

TABLES FOR TWO

Nargis Bar & Grill

155 Fifth Ave., Brooklyn (718-640-7000)

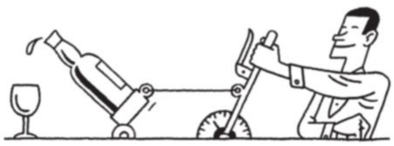
On a recent visit to Nargis, a new Park Slope outpost of an Uzbek restaurant in Sheepshead Bay, I found myself excitedly making connections. The pan-fried beef dumplings called *chuchvara*, small and dense, blanketed in caramelized onion and dill and served with sour cream, had a nuggety shape that reminded me of Japanese gyoza. The *plov*, or pilaf, flecked with carrot, chickpeas, scallions, and fatty scraps of lamb, was a cousin of fried rice. *Non* bread, a fluffy, chewy, sesame-topped round loaf with a depressed center, looked like a gigantic bialy, and the crisp, concave *non-toki* resembled a sheet of matzo—"but better!" the chef and owner, Boris Bangiev, declared, as he worked the room. "More salt, more sugar, and caraway seeds." (He was right.)

And of course: the food of Uzbekistan and Central Asia shares much in common with the food of the surrounding regions, from Eastern Europe to East Asia. There are a number of other great Uzbek restaurants in New York—in Coney Island, Rego Park, and even midtown Manhattan—thanks largely to a population of Bukharan Jews, like Bangiev, who emigrated from Uzbekistan after the collapse of the Soviet Union. But Bangiev is shrewd to expand to this neighborhood, dominated by pub grub and tepid takeout. The décor mixes Uzbek textiles and ceramics with the familiar trappings of commercialized Brooklyn: exposed brick, distressed tables, tin ceilings. The menu, happily, is almost exactly the same as the original.

A mixed appetizer platter includes hummus and baba ghanoush but also kimchi and a curled tangle of "Korean style carrot salad with cumin"—in the thirties, Soviet Koreans were deported to Uzbekistan. *Samsa*—tricornered little packages of crunchy, flaky pastry—and the delicate-skinned Turkic dumplings known as *manti* are filled with barely sweetened minced pumpkin or a mixture of beef and lamb. Bangiev has gained some fame for his method of cooking kebabs—skewers of cubed lamb or chicken hearts—over embers kept glowing with the aid of drugstore hair dryers. They come with raw onion, sumac, and a chunky, complex tomato-based condiment, the ingredients of which I tried carefully to discern until Bangiev told me there were fifty. But what I'm still thinking about is a dish that eluded comparison: a cold, creamy mixture of chopped egg and chewy matchsticks of beef tongue, balanced by bitter white radish, scallion, and dill, and topped with a pile of golden fried onions. It's called the Tashkent salad, named for Uzbekistan's capital and Bangiev's home town, to which he hasn't returned in twenty-six years. *(Dishes $3-$25.)*

—*Hannah Goldfield*

BAR TAB



Loverboy

127 Avenue C (212-539-1900)

On a recent evening in Alphabet City, a heavy snow was melting into an icy soup, served cold on the sidewalk. Some might have taken this as a sign to stay in and snuggle up, but others found themselves trudging through it to visit Loverboy, a bar opened last June by the owners of Mother's Ruin, in Nolita. Its large windows are ideal for people-stepping-in-snow-puddles-watching, and they open up for a pleasant breeze in the summer. Two people surveyed the list of cocktails (twelve dollars each) above the bar, considering their options. "I don't know about the slushy drink—I already had enough of that outside," one said, in reference to the Dr Angel Face. Instead, they chose the excellent No Pants Dance, a combination of tequila, agave, lime, and pineapple with a chipotle rim. No dancing was done, and pants remained firmly in place, but the drink was a perfect pairing of spicy and sweet. Also good was the dry Once in a Blue Moon, a mix of gin and Avèze, a citrusy liqueur from the South of France whose rarity may lend the cocktail its name. Patrons sitting in the back had a hard time ignoring enticing wafts from the kitchen; they eventually succumbed and ordered, from a food menu helpfully divided into Pizza and Not Pizza, the Loverboy pie, with crushed tomatoes, mozzarella, pepperoni, and a ramp-ranch dressing. Served in thick rectangular slices, it looked like a school pizza that's come to its ten-year reunion and is doing great. It was the perfect indulgent counterpoint to an inhospitable night. Warmed and cheese-filled, the slushy skeptic ended up trying the Dr Angel Face anyway, and enjoyed several sips before heading back out to slosh through the real thing.—*Colin Stokes*

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
A REVELATORY CASE

When all is said, done, and litigated in the case of Stephanie Clifford, who is known professionally as Stormy Daniels, the biggest question might be why the President of the United States didn't just let her talk. Clifford, who stars in and directs pornographic films, is suing Donald Trump to nullify what her complaint calls a "hush agreement," which she signed on October 28, 2016, regarding an affair that she said she'd had with him a decade earlier. She was paid a hundred and thirty thousand dollars, and she kept quiet through the campaign. But her suit contends that she isn't bound by the agreement, because Trump never signed it and because his lawyer Michael Cohen had spoken—and lied—about it publicly.

The suit also says that the Trump camp used "coercive tactics" to pressure her to stay silent; on Friday, Clifford's lawyer, Michael Avenatti, said in multiple interviews that there had been intimations of violence, though he declined to give details. He told *The New Yorker*, "When my client is able to speak openly, we are confident that the American people will believe her when she says she was physically threatened."

As wild as the story is, it could have amounted to little more than a few tabloid flashes amid the mayhem in the White House last week. On Tuesday, Trump fired Rex Tillerson, the Secretary of State, on Twitter, and by Thursday H. R. McMaster, the national-security adviser, was said to be next, along with a raft of variously bungling Cabinet secretaries. And yet the Clifford case is not only singularly revealing of the President's character and his operations but also a likely harbinger of major troubles ahead.

This Trump crisis, as is the case with so many others, is largely self-inflicted, and involves the usual heedless scramble of denials. When the *Wall Street Journal* first reported the payment to Clifford, in January, Cohen said that it was his own "private transaction," using his money, and that the Trump Organization and the Trump campaign had nothing to do with it. This never made much sense, since the Trump Organization employed him. But, even if Cohen's story were true, it raised questions, more broadly, about where the money comes from and where it goes in Trump's dealings.

There wouldn't even be a lawsuit were it not for the fact that, last month, a company that Cohen set up to make the payment to Clifford obtained from an arbitrator a temporary restraining order directing Clifford to remain silent, or risk a million-dollar penalty. This effort was futile: weeks earlier, *InTouch* had pulled from its archives an unpublished 2011 interview in which Clifford had described her encounter with Trump, in terms that leave little to the imagination. ("He was like, 'Come here.' And I was like, 'Ugh, here we go.'") More than that, the President's lawyers seem not to have considered what Clifford's next move would be: challenging the arbitration. They had, in effect, engineered something of a win-win situation for her. Practically speaking, in order for Trump to hold Clifford to the agreement, he has to fight her in court—a process he began Friday—and come out and admit to the deal publicly.



CNN and the *Journal* reported that one of the lawyers who obtained the order was Jill Martin, another Trump Organization employee. (She was the point person in the Trump University fraud case.) A statement from the company said that, like Cohen, Martin had handled the matter only "in her individual capacity." This paints a picture of the Trump Organization as a place where anything that the company isn't quite supposed to do might be done as a personal favor, perhaps dressed up as an act of friendship or loyalty. It is a further sign that the special counsel Robert Mueller's subpoena of Trump Organization business records, reported last week, might turn up a true morass.

The Trump White House appears to function much like the Trump Organization, in terms of the blurring of lines. Recent weeks have brought a compendium

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

of stories about Cabinet members treating public money as a personal privilege—thirty thousand dollars for Ben Carson's office dining set, forty thousand for Scott Pruitt's soundproof phone booth, a million for Steven Mnuchin's military flights. With the President's sons meeting with foreign political figures while travelling the world on business trips, with his daughter playing a diplomatic role with leaders of countries where she has commercial interests, and with his son-in-law seemingly marked as a potential recipient of foreign bribes by all and sundry, it's important to know who pays whom, and for what.

The Trump team's response to the Clifford debacle seems to have been driven by the President's vanity, temper, and resentment. All of those have also been on display in his larger response to Mueller's investigation, from his firing of James Comey, the F.B.I. director—an action that exposed him to possible obstruction-of-justice charges—to his apparent desire, last week, to fire Andrew McCabe, Comey's former deputy, just days before McCabe's retirement, in a petty attempt to deny him his full benefits. For a man who has built a career on bluffing and intimidation, Trump is surprisingly clumsy when it comes to those tactics, and oblivious of their costs.

After all, why didn't the President sign the agreement? Did he never intend to, or could he just not be bothered? With Trump, it can be hard to tell bad will from bad lawyering. He regularly demands that his subordinates operate in accordance with what he thinks the law ought to be, rather than what it is. This has been the case in his berating of Attorney General Jeff Sessions, for failing to make problems go away, and, last week, in reports that Trump's lawyers were considering trying to block the broadcast, now scheduled for March 25th, of an interview that Anderson Cooper conducted with Clifford for "60 Minutes." There is no legal rationale for such prior restraint. But it wouldn't be the first time that the President has indicated that he believes he has, or should have, the power to silence the press.

Then again, Trump's circle might be trying to enforce Clifford's confidentiality agreement not for its own sake but in order to send a message to other people, who may have signed similar agreements, about the cost of breaking them. ("In my experience, bullies have one speed and one speed only," Avenatti told *The New Yorker*. "They don't just bully one person. They bully many people.") A hearing in the case is set for July 12th, in Los Angeles; Clifford has set up an online crowdfunding page to defray her legal costs, which may be considerable. She won't be the only one with bills like that. In Washington these days, many people find themselves in sudden need of a good lawyer—above all, the President.

—*Amy Davidson Sorkin*

SHOE DEPT.
INTO THE WOOD



Tim Brown, a World Cup soccer player from Wellington, New Zealand, and Joey Zwillinger, the head of an eco-friendly algae-chemical company, met through their wives a while back, and, observing a trend toward workplace informality, went into business with a loose idea: knitted woolen sneakers. "This was the very first shoe we made," Brown said the other day, in San Francisco, gesturing toward a photograph of footwear that bulged and puckered like a tea cozy. "It looks like something you might wear if you have some sort of medical problem."

That was then. Since releasing its first non-hideous model, in 2016, their company, Allbirds, has sold more than a million pairs of sustainably sourced woolly sneakers. "Wool is this miracle fibre that regulates temperature and wicks away moisture," Brown said. Lately, Allbirds has become the It shoe among woke millennials and techies, who admire its boundless workplace chic. "We went through multiple iterations to arrive at the simplest sneaker we could imagine," Brown explained. "It's what we call the right amount of nothing."

By that measure, there's more nothing than ever in Allbirds' latest shoe, which is light and made from plants. As morning light struck some big philodendrons in their office windows, Brown and Zwillinger convened in a conference room to admire the new product: a sneaker called Tree, which is woven largely out of fibre made from eucalyptus pulp.

"This fibre is one of the most sustainable materials on the planet," Zwillinger said, caressing the fabric, which is cool, silky, and woven into mesh. He was wearing work-casual (a striped button-down, jeans, blue Allbirds with white soles), in contrast to Brown's cool minimalism (charcoal T-shirt, navy cardigan, cream Allbirds with matching soles). The new Tree shoe comes in two versions: a "runner," which laces up like a track shoe, and a "skipper," a low-riding model reminiscent of a boat shoe. The eucalyptus in the uppers is farmed, using no irrigation, in South Africa (the shoes are manufactured in Shenzhen, China), and produces fabric ideal for summer, when thick wool footwear might feel wrong.

"Our best-performing market in the country is Atlanta—no idea why," Zwillinger said. "But give the wool a hot, humid day in Atlanta, and, if you're not wearing socks, it gets *swampy*."

Allbirds' headquarters is in a historic neighborhood of San Francisco south of Telegraph Hill. "Mark Twain used to do writing in this building," Zwillinger chirped, and he and Brown slipped out a door to a commercial alley. In a new annex, across the way, designers were peering at Tree prototypes arrayed on tables.

"This looks like a shoe that's been dug up from a village in the Arctic," the company's head of design, Jamie McLellan (black Allbirds, black soles), said, picking up a stained and crumpled Tree prototype in off-white. "But



it was the first one where we realized we could knit the fibre."

"There's probably another fifty prototypes after that," Brown said.

The final version of the Tree shoe has laces made from recycled plastic bottles, an insole derived from castor beans, and eyelets based on plant starch. To create the eucalyptus fabric, wood pulp is dissolved in a nontoxic bath that turns it into tufts of downy fibre, called Tencel.

"The process takes five per cent of the water used for cotton and about half the carbon footprint," Jad Finck (blue Allbirds, white soles), the vice-president of innovation and sustainability, said, rubbing Tencel between his fingers. The fibre is woven into a cloth that is airier than the merino-wool fabric in original Allbirds. "We want people who don't know anything about materials to be able to say, 'Oh, yeah, that one kind of looks like a sweater! And that one sort of looks like a screen door for your feet.'"

Finck wandered over to a table laden with bits of other materials used for research. "This is yak hair," he said, examining a swatch. "This is a sugarcane-based microfibre—it kind of looks like suède." He picked up a square of bright-red fabric. "This is made from pineapples."

Traditionally, the hard part of selling shoes—even those not made from wood—is getting a good fit. Allbirds does most of its business online, and it offers no half sizes, so its products must suit more feet than normal.

"With the Trees, the four-way stretch can be pretty accommodating," Lisa Halbower-Fenton, the company's product-development head, said. (She wore boots with a plaid shirt and jeans; she had arrived at Allbirds after decades working for Big Shoe.) She picked up a runner and flattened her palm over the tongue. "The shoe's got to fit right here, over the navicular bone. The second-most-important part of the fit is the heel." Each shoe is built on a last—a polyethylene mold of a foot.

"Then you take out the last, put in the insole, lace it up, put it in the box," Zwillinger explained. He was hunched over, straining to pull the last out of a prototype.

"Bob's your uncle," Halbower-Fenton said.

—Nathan Heller

THE BENCH
BLOCKHEAD



As Twitter insults go, the one by Rebecca Buckwalter-Poza, a journalist in Washington, was pretty mild. On June 6th, after President Trump tweeted some criticism of the news media, Buckwalter-Poza replied, "To be fair you didn't win the WH: Russia won it for you." What happened next, though, was unusual. President Trump, from his @realDonaldTrump Twitter handle, blocked Buckwalter-Poza, meaning that he wouldn't see any more of her responses and Buckwalter-Poza would no longer see any of the President's tweets. That made her one of at least a hundred people Trump has blocked, and it led, ultimately, to a hearing in federal district court in Manhattan the other day. Buckwalter-Poza was one of seven Twitter users—including a surgeon in Tennessee and a police officer in Texas—who joined a lawsuit against the President, arguing that, by blocking them, he had violated their First Amendment rights. Judge Naomi Reice Buchwald conducted the hearing, at which Katie Fallow, a lawyer for the Knight First Amendment Institute, at Columbia University, squared off against Michael Baer, a Justice Department lawyer, who represented the President.

In pretrial proceedings, the plaintiffs obtained several interesting revelations from the Trump Administration. The government agreed that Trump himself wrote most of his own tweets, occasionally with the assistance of Daniel Scavino, the White House's social-media director. More to the point, the government admitted that Trump himself had blocked the plaintiffs. But the real question in the case was whether he had the right to do so. This, in turn, raised an existential question about the online world: what is Twitter?

Fallow looks like a prosecutor on "Law & Order," and Baer has a baby face, and their combined ages are roughly equal to that of Judge Buchwald, who became a magistrate judge in 1980 and a district judge in 1999. Accordingly, the two young lawyers addressed her with the gentle condescension usually reserved for Mom,



when she calls to say her printer isn't working. Most of the argument involved a set of competing analogies. As Fallow put it, the President is operating his Twitter account "like a virtual town hall. His act of blocking the plaintiffs based on viewpoint from that virtual forum is both state action and violates the First Amendment."

Not so, said Baer, who argued that Twitter was more like a convention. "If we're going to focus on real-world analogies, the better one is to a conference or a convention where you can imagine thousands of people milling about and groups of conversations taking place," he said, "and that public official is free to approach whoever he wants, be approached by whoever he wants, and to say, 'No, thank you,' to whomever he wants and to take any number of considerations into account when making those decisions."

Judge Buchwald presided in a prim tweed suit (no robe). After expressing a regal distaste for Twitter, which she called "something that I don't consider appropriate for judges to engage in," she demonstrated that she understood the social-media platform at least as well as the lawyers. She brought the courtroom to near-silence with an idea that cut through the fog of the lawyers' verbiage. "To the extent that the reason that the President has blocked these individuals is because he does not welcome what they have to say," she said, "he can avoid hearing them simply by 'muting' them." Twitter offers its users two options to avoid seeing the tweets of others. Trump used the block function, which means that he wouldn't see a particular person's tweets and that person could no longer see or respond to his tweets. Muting offers an intermediate step. Trump would no longer have to see the tweets of those he disdains, but they could still respond to his tweets.

On behalf of the plaintiffs, Fallow said that that solution would be a step in the right direction. The Justice Department lawyer made no such concession. Converting the blocked tweeters into muted tweeters would require the President (or, more likely, Scavino) to click through a hundred-odd Twitter accounts, one by one, and tweak their status. Given the President's reluctance to concede anything to his critics, perhaps Baer wanted to preserve a free hand for his boss.

By the end of the hearing, Judge Buchwald didn't indicate which way she was leaning. As the proceedings wound down, Baer argued that the President should be immune from even having to address the plaintiffs' claims. This prompted an arched eyebrow from the Judge, who said, "And he's above the law?"

"No, Your Honor," Baer replied.

"I just want to check," she said.

—*Jeffrey Toobin*

PARIS POSTCARD
FIBRE FIEND



"At eighty-three years old, Sheila Hicks, born in the summer of 1934, in Hastings, Nebraska, is the artist that everyone is fighting over," the French newspaper *Le Figaro* wrote recently, listing Hicks as one of twenty cultural figures who would "make Paris in 2018." Hicks has been on a streak. Her monumental works have recently appeared on the High Line (fibre-wrapped tubes like giant pool noodles) and in the gardens of Versailles (where she cocooned a statue of Proserpine in blue, purple, and orange ribbons). "Life Lines," an exhibition devoted to her seven decades of work, opened last month at the Pompidou, in Paris.

The tempting storyline is that of a long-neglected genius finally having her moment. But Hicks has been a star all along. She was just out of Yale, where she studied with Josef Albers, and living in Mexico, where Luis Barragán helped install her first show, when the Museum of Modern Art acquired "Blue Letter," a double-sided woven panel on which she'd inscribed hieroglyphs by varying each row of weft. Told the other day that the fashion label Proenza Schouler had cited her as the inspiration for its Fall 2018 collection, she shrugged and said, "Every year, there's one of them."



Sheila Hicks

Hicks's forebears had a general store in Nebraska. The family moved around: Detroit, Winnetka. She went to France and met Raoul d'Harcourt, the author of "Textiles of Ancient Peru and their Techniques," a book she'd been obsessed with at Yale, to the point of choosing textile over painting as her preferred medium. Paris has been her base since 1964, in a life that has included marrying a beekeeper, and then a Chilean artist; having two children; collaborating with Stanley Kubrick on "The Shining"; working as a textile designer for Knoll; creating bas-reliefs for Eero Saarinen's TWA terminal at J.F.K.; and spending time in Morocco, Japan, and India, where the ponytails of schoolgirls gave her the idea for a series of braided wall hangings. After two husbands, she met a lawyer who lives in New York. She recalled, "When we married, I said, 'Am I getting married again? O.K. I can get married, but I can't divorce Paris.'" The couple commute.

The other day, Hicks was at the Pompidou, watching a series of documentary films that the curators had resurrected as part of the show. "A friend who saw it called me and said it looked like Julia Child was in the kitchen," she said. "Pass me the salt and give me the vinegar!"

"You see the junk all over my studio?" she said, when the camera panned her atelier, settling on a piece made of several hundred nurses' blouses, which she'd dyed in a washing machine, flayed, and then stitched back together into a collage. "It's like drawing or sculpting with the scissors."

There was footage from Saudi Arabia, where in the nineteen-eighties Hicks brought a huge, dune-like tapestry that she'd made for King Saud University. "Look at this, ten people weaving sand!" she exclaimed. She went on, in that dry, twinkly way of the great women of her generation, "People don't know what to

do with my work. I mean, if someone told you you inherited this, what would you do with it?"

Since her student days, Hicks has carried around a pocket loom that she uses to make weavings she calls "*minimes*"—little things on which to try out new techniques, or just to meditate. ("*Was ist das,* girl?" she recalls Albers saying, of the loom.) "The only time I didn't do them was in 1988, after I stepped off the curb into a gutter in New York. I had screws in my right leg like the Eiffel Tower."

A curator stuck his head in and said that they were bringing in extra benches, owing to the show's popularity.

"You thought four people might come to see it," Hicks said. She stepped out of the alcove in which the film was being projected. Cords that she had constructed from linen, synthetic raffia, wool, cotton, and sisal hung from the rafters like gnarled vines. Strands of acrylic seemed to gush from the ceiling, pooling into reservoirs on the floor. In a corner, Hicks had piled bales of brightly colored fibre—orange, yellow—into a bulbous formation that called up all kinds of associations, from mountaineering to McDonald's ball pits. (A child psychologist once commissioned a few pieces for use as therapeutic tools.)

"It was about changing the shape of the room," Hicks said. "The room was a cube, so I took away this feeling of being in a box." The piece was called "The Saffron Sentinel," which led a visitor to ask why she had chosen the color.

"That's a silly question," she replied. "Let's go by process of elimination. Are you going to do gray? Honey, like the floor? How about blue, like the sky outside?" Saffron it was, then.

—*Lauren Collins*

TEACHABLE MOMENT
HE SAID, SHE SAID



The #MeToo movement has prompted countless gatherings of women. What about men? On a recent brisk morning, Fatherly, a Web site for dads, convened twenty-eight academics and professionals at a Tribeca café to discuss how to raise boys to be better men and how existent men might conduct themselves better. They made sure to invite some women.

"People sometimes confuse us with a men's-rights organization," Andrew Burmon, Fatherly's editor-in-chief, said, sipping coffee. He had a thick beard and was wearing a blazer. "We say, 'We're having a breakfast to talk about men,' and they're, like, 'Oh, you must hate women.' We're, like, 'No, no, no!' "

At nine o'clock, the group took seats at long tables set with mismatched china. Michael Rothman, Fatherly's chief executive officer, kicked things off: "Looking at the news today, there's this kind of through line that men are in trouble."

Paul Donahue, a clinical psychologist, jumped in. "Many fathers emphasize competition and achievement with their boys," he said. "How much emphasis is put on compassion?"

"One thing we still manufacture in the United States is media," Susan McPherson, a communications consultant, said. "Can we show men in a more compassionate way?

" 'PAW Patrol' doesn't really explore emotional development," Simon Isaacs, Fatherly's chief content officer, said.

Esther Perel, a Belgian couples counsellor and TED Talks star, saw a bigger problem: "the fragility of male identity." She said, "When we make a girl play with a truck, we don't think it's going to make her less of a girl. But, when we think of a boy playing with a doll, we think it's going to weaken his essence as a man." The room murmured in agreement.

"There's this photo book for girls, 'Strong Is the New Pretty,' but there's no 'Soft Is the New Handsome,'" Isaacs mused.

Rothman nodded toward Andy Katz-Mayfield, a founder of Harry's, an online purveyor of shaving products. "Harry's is trying," he said, referring to an ad that the company ran listing masculine tropes ("grow a pair," "man up") with red lines through them.

"It got picked up by Infowars, and the backlash we got . . ." Katz-Mayfield said.

As platters of avocado toast were passed, there was talk of the need for more friendships between boys and girls, and the rigidity of American gender norms. Michael Skolnik, a founder of the Soze Agency, a content studio that's also a worker-owned coöperative, said, "I don't want to talk about the issue as if this is 2016. Because something has changed. For the first time in American history, whatever political side you lean on, you will not let your child watch a speech by the President." He went on, "When we think about raising our boys, we have to look at: what messages are they being sent from our leadership?"

Andrea Bastiani Archibald, a developmental psychologist and an executive with the Girl Scouts, said, "I encourage my sons to watch the President, because that is how you rise up and get angry." When the "Access Hollywood" tape came out, she said, her teen-age son told her, "I don't know what locker rooms he's hanging out in, Mom, but this is gross."

This provoked a defense of toxic masculinity. Zach Iscol, a founder of the military-news Web site Task & Purpose, said, "When you're kicking down a door to shoot somebody in the face, and that's your job, toxic masculinity plays a role."

Brian Heilman, from Promundo, a nonprofit that studies gender dynamics, offered some research data. "We have to grapple with the fact that men who hold most firmly to rigid ideas—that a man should do *this* and a woman should do *that*—those guys, in some of our data sets, have greater life satisfaction." Heads around the room nodded morosely. Heilman added, "But we also see that those men are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, and are more likely to be involved in traffic accidents."

As waiters cleared, Skolnik suggested turning the harassment discussion inside out. "The courageous conversation that us men have to have is: who among us?" Some men shifted in their seats. "Instead of looking at how many victims there are on the women's side, how many perpetrators on the men's side do we know in our lives, in our homes, with our friendships, in our office spaces?"

Perel called out, "And what do we do once we know?"

Skolnik laughed and shook his head. "I'm going to call you and you're going to tell me, because you're an expert."

—*Sheila Marikar*

ANNALS OF THEATRE

THE ASCENSION

The director Marianne Elliott takes on Tony Kushner's "Angels in America."

BY MICHAEL SCHULMAN



Onstage at the Neil Simon Theatre one recent afternoon, Andrew Garfield was wrestling with an angel. The thirty-four-year-old movie star was in white pajamas; the Angel, played by the British actress Amanda Lawrence, wore a Phyllis Diller wig, a skirt fashioned from a frayed American flag, and eight-foot-long wings made of crinoline and linen, as grimy and tattered as a New York City pigeon's. "Mortal Kombat"-style music blared as the Angel dragged Garfield across the stage by his leg, slammed his head on the ground, and then floated above his motionless body. Then: a fakeout! Garfield grabbed her by the arm and rammed his head into her torso. The Angel shot up twenty feet in the air, lifting Garfield with her, and shrieked:

> I I I I Am the
> CONTINENTAL PRINCIPALITY OF AMERICA, I I I I
> AM THE BIRD OF PREY I Will NOT BE COMPELLED.

She drifted back down to the stage, and Garfield straddled her, victorious. A choir was heard. Garfield turned to watch a pink neon ladder descend from the rafters. "Entrance has been gained," the Angel told him, adding, "Now release me. I have torn a muscle in my thigh."

"Big deal," Garfield retorted, in a haughty drag-queen lilt. "*My* leg's been hurting for months." He grasped a rung and—bringing to mind his Spider-Man days—climbed nimbly into the heavens.

"Well done, everybody," came a voice over the sound system. "Thank you for your time." The voice—less God-like than warbly—belonged to Marianne Elliott, the British stage director, who was sitting in the orchestra at a tech table littered with binders and half-finished smoothies from Pret a Manger. It was five hours before the first Broadway preview of "Perestroika," the second half of Tony Kushner's two-part drama, "Angels in America." (The first half is "Millennium Approaches.") Elliott's moody revival, which opens this week, is the first production of "Angels" on Broadway since 1993, when its vision of the AIDS epidemic and the lagging response to it was urgent news. With its sprawling cosmology and political fury, Kushner's "gay fantasia on national themes" (as it is subtitled) thundered into the theatrical canon like a new book of the Bible, in which a dying gay man (Prior Walter, the role played by Garfield) serves as an unlikely, and unwilling, prophet.

"All the characters wrestle with their angel at one point in the play," Elliott had told me. A soft-spoken woman with a pert blond bob, Elliott, who is fifty-one, is as self-effacing as she is successful. She is known for her visual ingenuity, often using puppetry, choreographed movement, and technological wizardry to underscore human (and animal) behavior. Her seven-and-a-half-hour revival of "Angels" premièred last May, at London's National Theatre, where she was previously responsible for two notable hits, "War Horse" (co-directed with Tom Morris) and "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time." Both toured internationally—unusual for non-musicals—and both came to Broadway, where each won the Tony Award for Best Play. Each also won the best-director prize, making Elliott the only woman with more than one Tony for directing.

At the "Perestroika" rehearsal, Elliott wore a dark blazer embellished with the words "Art Is Truth" in rhinestones. ("She's the most fashionable director I've ever worked with," Nathan Lane, who plays the right-wing lawyer and power broker Roy Cohn, told me.) The goal that day was to fine-tune the flying and

Elliott's flair for spectacular effects is matched by her psychological acuity.

 PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORDIE WOOD

to coördinate the entrance and exit of the neon ladder with the light and sound cues. There was a slight malfunction of the wings—they weren't attaching properly to the Angel's back—so an alternate pair was brought in. Elliott paced the aisle, conferring with designers, occasionally dispensing a hug. "We did a run yesterday with about eight stops," she told me. "We'll see how it goes. It'll be the same audience that we had for the first preview—they were just so lovely. I just hope the show doesn't stop tonight, for the actors' sake more than anything else. It's so technical, so huge."

For directors, "Angels in America" presents a challenge: the text can be both maddeningly specific and maddeningly vague. The scene with Prior wrestling the Angel (Act V, Scene 1) contains the stage direction "Within this incredibly bright column of light there is a ladder of even brighter, purer light, reaching up into infinity." A lighting designer can easily key in the "bright column of light," but "infinity" requires brainstorming. After Prior returns from Heaven, Elliott griped, "The stage directions are something like 'Prior floats back into his bed.'" She laughed. "Thanks, Tony."

"Angels" is at once epic and intimate. "Tony is tackling nothing less than the relationship between freedom and responsibility in the American character," Oskar Eustis, who commissioned the play for San Francisco's Eureka Theatre and co-directed the 1992 production at the Mark Taper Forum, told me. "And he's doing almost all of it through the medium of two-person scenes. That combination of the big lens and the small lens is Tony's particular genius, but it represents an enormous challenge for the director." Elliott's collaborators describe her as the rare director with equal flairs for visual inventiveness and psychological acuity. "She explores every ounce of text and makes you go back and reëxamine things, and questions you constantly," Lane told me. Garfield, whose research process included going to London drag revues, said, "She was very encouraging of my feminine side. She would tell me often that I reminded her of her best friend from high school. She woke up the parts of me that needed to be woken up."

The playwright Simon Stephens, who has worked with Elliott on several of his plays, including "Curious Incident," described her as "the most elegant kind of swan." He went on, "She creates this illusion she's not working at all, but underneath the water she's working harder than any director I've dealt with." In 2002, she directed his play "Port," about a working-class teen-age girl, at Manchester's Royal Exchange. "I thought I'd written a play that was defiant and punk, defined by the juvenile energy of this girl," Stephens said. "Before the first read-through, she said, 'You do realize that death is mentioned fifty-eight times in this play.' I hadn't read it as carefully as she had."

For someone who commands such large, ambitious productions, Elliott is strikingly inward, even openly insecure. "I'm not the best choice for this play," she told me when we first met, over lunch at the Jane Hotel. "I'm female, I'm English, I'm not in any way Mormon or Jewish. I wasn't affected by AIDS directly. So there are lots of reasons why I shouldn't be doing it. But I feel like it is my story." "Angels," she went on, depicts people "stripping off their identities and redefining themselves."

When I asked how that was her story, she laughed. "Well, on a general level, I have a crisis of confidence," she said. "I don't often think that I can do it. And yet here I am. I hate public speaking. When I was a kid, I never spoke. I would sit under a table and not speak to anybody. No words for years. So to be in a position now where I'm leading a huge company of people and having to stir them and infuse them and inspire them every day, that's not an easy thing."

Yet beneath her timidity is tenacity. The producer Chris Harper, with whom she recently formed the company Elliott & Harper Productions, told me, "She becomes a kind of warrior. She's, like, 'I am not going to let go. I know how to do this.' There's total fearless absolute insistence. She'll take on anybody."

In 2016, "anybody" was Stephen Sondheim. Elliott wanted to direct "Company," his 1970 musical about a thirty-five-year-old man named Bobby, who is struggling with romantic commitment. Elliott, finding the play's concerns dated, wanted to make Bobby a woman. "I looked around, and I was surrounded by thirty-five-year-old women who are in my profession and thinking they should settle down," she explained. "And, if they do, they should do it quickly, because of the biological clock. But what does that mean in terms of their career?"

Sondheim had recently rejected the notion of an all-male "Company," which the director John Tiffany ("Once") had proposed. Elliott met with Sondheim at his New York town house and pitched her gender-swap concept. He agreed to let her workshop the idea and asked her to send him a tape. She returned to London and did just that. "I asked him to have a few people sitting with him when he watched it—some younger people, some women as well," she said. Harper told me, "She would have wrestled him to the ground." But she didn't have to. Sondheim gave her his blessing, and "Company," with the main character renamed Bobbie, will open in the West End this fall.

Directors of "Angels in America" have employed various levels of spectacle. George C. Wolfe's original Broadway production used lavish effects, as did Mike Nichols's HBO film. But the Belgian director Ivo van Hove set his production on a bare stage, and the Angel was a male nurse in hospital scrubs. Before rehearsals for the latest version began, Elliott and her set designer, Ian MacNeil, spent a year and a half hashing out the design, meeting every few weeks at MacNeil's apartment, in Shoreditch. They read each scene aloud, Elliott recalled, "trying to park the paranoia of 'How the fuck are we going to do this?'" MacNeil, who is gay, and lived in New York in the eighties, gave Elliott a crash course in gay culture, playing her Shirley Bassey and Kraftwerk and Cole Porter and Wagner. "We listened to Judy Garland a lot," Elliott said.

They had two big breakthroughs. The first was deciding on the look of the Angel. Elliott envisioned her not as a gleaming white creature out of a Renaissance fresco but as "flea-bitten and ragged. I kept saying, 'She's more of a cockroach or a monkey. There's something feral and animalistic about her.'" Instead of flying around on wires the whole time, the actress playing the Angel is manipulated by six puppeteers in black.

The other breakthrough was having the action of the play, at the beginning, take place on three turntables, allowing for rapid location shifts; then, as the play

goes on and gets more abstract, the turntables spin away and vanish.

"The play, for me, is about erosion," Elliott said. "We strip away walls. We strip away revolves. We strip away anything that isn't essential to the piece. And then we strip away illusions." By the time Prior visits Heaven, late in "Perestroika," the set has become the theatre itself. He pulls back a curtain—a "Wizard of Oz" reference—to find a team of angels working at lighting consoles and monitors, not unlike a stage crew during a tech rehearsal. "They're trying to make things work back on Earth, as if it was another stage," Elliott said. "And yet, of course, there's no God. There's no one person who is directing what should be happening down on the stage."

All this was of interest to Tony Kushner. More than most living playwrights of his stature, Kushner is an open resource, sometimes to the vexation of his collaborators. "He's very controlling, Tony, I have to say," Elliott told me. "But, because of that, he's also very generous." "The World Only Spins Forward," a new oral history of "Angels in America," by Isaac Butler and Dan Kois, includes a section called "Tony Has Notes." Declan Donnellan, who directed the first National Theatre production, in 1992, once received fifty pages from Kushner by fax in the middle of the night. Richard Feldman, who directed an early workshop at Juilliard, recalls getting a handwritten page that said, simply, "Ugh." Kushner and Eustis had constant high-pitched fights during the original Los Angeles production, leading to a falling out; when the show moved to Broadway, in 1993, Eustis was replaced by Wolfe. (The stage directors' union sued the New York producers, unsuccessfully, for retaining elements of Eustis's production. Kushner and Eustis have since reconciled.) Wolfe had his own tangles with the playwright. "Part 1 was a baptism, because I got volumes and volumes of notes," he told me. "But I did not retreat into a corner."

The relationship between director and playwright is tricky, a combination of co-parenting and shotgun wedding. Eustis told me, "It can be very challenging for a director to work with Tony's notes, because they tend to be infinitely more granular than most playwrights'. But he's also a hell of a lot smarter than most playwrights."

"I take a lot of notes," Kushner said, when I met him at a steak house before a preview of "Millennium Approaches." "Not nitpicky things, but I usually try to diagnose what I'm seeing." He'll scribble on a notepad in the dark, then type up his comments or dictate them to an assistant.

In the past quarter century, Kushner has worked on letting go. "I don't like that side of myself," he said. "There's a narcissistic vulnerability that I don't want to make anybody else's problem. We're seeing in the world right now what it feels like when somebody is unscrupulous about their narcissistic vulnerabilities becoming other people's problems." He stayed out of the way for most of Elliott's twelve-week rehearsal period at the National, but the two e-mailed constantly. She would ask him about a specific line or phrase—including the meaning of "bubbeleh"—and often get a three-page response.

Kushner liked the idea of the ratty Angel ("I've always wanted her to look odd. She certainly is an odd being—she has eight vaginas and a number of phalli," he said) but had reservations about the six spectral puppeteers. At first, Elliott was calling them "Familiars," but Kushner thought that sounded too witchy; he suggested "Shadows," drawing from Shakespeare. ("If we shadows have offended / Think but this, and all is mended.") Also, he said, "I was a little nervous, because eight is a kind of magic number in the play: there are eight acts, and Roy Cohn says at the beginning, 'I wish I was an octopus.' And there are eight actors in the play, so adding six more is a little bit . . . surprising. But I also thought, Why not?"

He did lodge some objections. In Act III of "Millennium Approaches," Prior hallucinates his ex-boyfriend, Louis, who materializes in his bedroom. "Moon River" plays, and they slow-dance. "Tony really wants that 'Moon River' to start when they start dancing," Elliott told me. "But I love that it starts when Louis appears, in this beautiful tuxedo, with a mirror ball and smoke on the stage and this pink haze. That's how I would imagine my fantasy guy arriving in my bedroom." Kushner voiced his preference several times, but ultimately let Elliott decide what to do. Before the second preview, he told me, "I have to find out if I won or not." (He hadn't.) He went on, "If I'm working with a director I respect—and I respect Marianne very, very much—I'll ask for something five or six times, and then, if it's not happening, I don't want to make the director feel like they have to say, 'Will you please fuck off?'" Elliott said, "I've learned to say to Tony, 'I don't see it that way. Let's agree to differ.'"

Elliott had been single-minded about getting the rights to "Angels," which had been held by London's Old Vic; Kevin Spacey, at that time the Old Vic's artistic director, wanted to play Roy Cohn. "I literally banged on the doors until they heard me," she recalled. The moment Spacey dropped the idea, she took it to the National, where she was an associate director.

The revival turned out to be timely: the first day of rehearsal was January 21, 2017, Donald Trump's first full day in office, just after the L.G.B.T.-rights page disappeared from the White House Web site. Cohn, a closeted gay man and former aide to Senator Joseph McCarthy, had been an early Trump mentor. (He died of AIDS, in 1986, but insisted to the end that he had liver cancer.) "Everything that Tony captured in Roy Cohn is now in the Oval Office," Eustis said. "That complete shamelessness, that utter aggression, that complete immorality. Tony wrote about it twenty-five years ago, and now Cohn's protégé is President." Elliott told me, "It suddenly became this important political statement that we were doing it."

Elliott was reared in Stockport, a suburb of Manchester, far from the thrashing rise of the American right. She comes from a distinguished theatrical lineage. Her mother, Rosalind Knight, is an actress whose credits include "Tom Jones"; Knight's father, Esmond Knight, was also an actor, who appeared in Laurence Olivier's film "Henry V." Elliott's father, Michael Elliott, was the son of a canon in the Church of England who led radio services during the Second World War. Michael Elliott was a prominent stage director; when Marianne was nine, he moved the family from London to Manchester, where he was a founding director of the Royal Exchange, a theatre built in a former cotton-trade center partially destroyed in the Blitz.

As a child, Elliott hated the theatre.

But in our conversations she recalled seeing her mother as the Evil Stepmother in a production of "Cinderella": "At the end, she realized she had been quite cruel, and she ripped off her evil-stepmother clothes and had this fantastic dress underneath. She would do this bop, as she called it, around the stage. That's sort of seared into my memory, because the audience absolutely loved it—the showmanship." Her memories of her father have less to do with his work than with his chronic health problems. He used a home dialysis machine three nights a week. Elliott's mother told me, "Marianne rather kept away from that, because the machine made frightening noises."

Elliott sensed traces of what she called her father's "difficult, dark background." His mother had struggled with mental illness, and his brother was killed in a bicycle accident when he was a teen-ager. When Marianne was about sixteen, her father left the family to be with another woman. "There were things going on that were beyond my comprehension, and the way that I dealt with that was to get very quiet and observant," she said.

About a year later, after undergoing a kidney transplant, her father died. "I sort of went inside myself, which is what I knew how to do—just imploded in," she recalled. Elliott did badly in school, and felt that there was nothing she was good at. (Her older sister, Susannah, was the "shining star.") To compound the upheaval, Michael's death led to a rift between the Elliott clan and the remaining directors of the Royal Exchange. "They were pretty vile to us," Knight said. "I think they were jealous of Michael's reputation and his talent. They were bound by hate. " At her agent's urging, she moved the girls back to London.

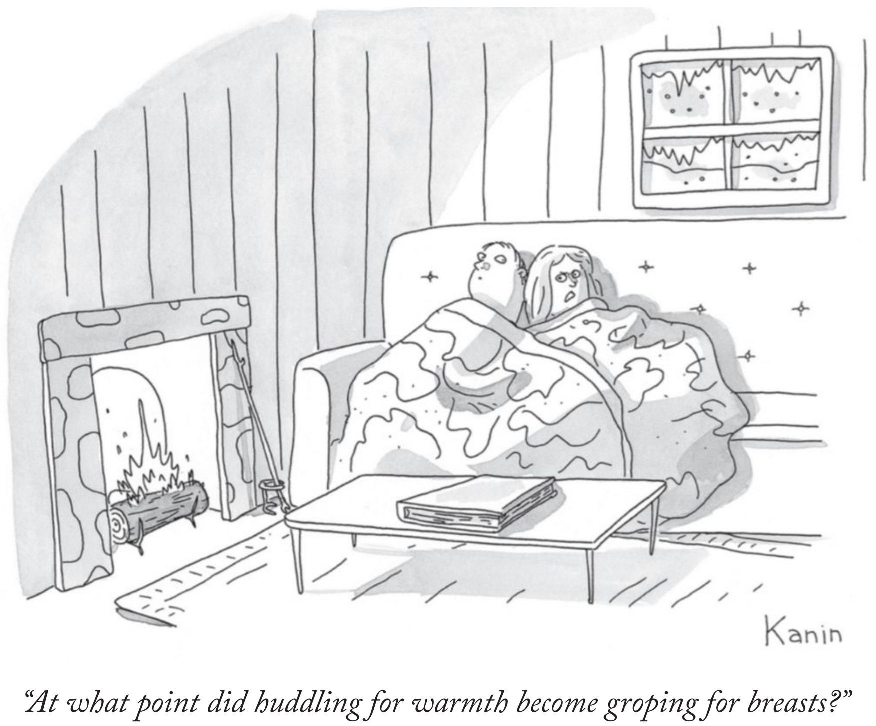
Elliott never imagined herself joining the family trade. "I honestly assumed that directors were male, and intellectual academics," she said. "Which they were at the time, and my dad was that." Despite her resistance, she wound up studying drama at the University of Hull, in Yorkshire, "because I wasn't really clever enough to do anything else." She had a brief, awful foray into acting, in Lorca's "The Love of Don Perlimpín and Belisa in the Garden." She told me, "There was a third-year directing me, and he kept saying, 'Can you try to be a bit more sexy?' That was a really good learning curve for me, because (a) I thought, How dare you sit there in your nice, comfortable rehearsal-room clothes, while I've got this ridiculous costume on, and just tell me that I have to be sexy? You're not taking on board the fact that I feel very exposed. And (b) you can't tell an actor to be sexy, because it's not about the effect you're trying to create. It should always be about what you're trying to do to somebody else."

After graduating, she moved back to London and took waitressing and secretarial jobs, then assisted a casting director and worked at Granada, the television studio. When she was twenty-three, her boyfriend, Stewart Harcourt, was struggling to break through as a playwright, and suggested that she direct one of his scripts. "We rehearsed it in my bedroom," she said. "We scraped the money together and took holiday pay." The play, "The Good Times Will Come," was produced in 1994, in a space above an Islington pub. Remarkably, people from the Royal Exchange—from which her family had cut ties years earlier—caught the show and offered her a job as an assistant director.

In Manchester, she found a mentor in Greg Hersov, one of the newer artistic directors. Hersov was impressed by Elliott's meticulous preparation. "She creates a very quiet, calm atmosphere—no histrionics," he told me. She met her husband, the actor Nick Sidi, when she directed a production of "As You Like It." (They have a thirteen-year-old daughter, Eve Blue.) Returning to her father's theatre seems as though it would be a Freudian minefield, but Elliott was surprisingly at ease. "Maybe I just felt like I was completing the circle," she said.

In 2005, Nicholas Hytner, the artistic director of the National Theatre, asked Elliott to direct Ibsen's "Pillars of the Community." The production, starring Damian Lewis and Lesley Manville, got five stars from the *Guardian*, which called it "stupendous." Hytner invited Elliott to join the theatre as an associate. He saw her insecurity as a source of strength. "She was constantly astonished that the rest of the world had such confidence in her," Hytner told me. "She is as well prepared a director as I ever came across at the National, partly because, I suspect, she has a horror of having to wing it. Some directors—particularly university-educated men—are very good at winging it. She never needs to."

Another associate, Tom Morris, had the idea of adapting Michael Morpurgo's children's novel "War Horse," about a country horse pressed into service in the First World War. Morris, a physical-theatre specialist, was eager to work with the South African troupe Handspring Puppet Company. Hytner asked Elliott to direct. "She'd shown herself to be a



"At what point did huddling for warmth become groping for breasts?"

tremendous storyteller, and she seemed hungry to occupy big stages and engage big audiences," he said. But Elliott was daunted, and asked Morris to co-direct. The artistic hurdle was obvious: the book is told from the horse's point of view, but Elliott knew that a talking horse would be "ridiculous." She said, "We had to relay what Joey the horse is going through in other ways than him expressing it through words."

The first preview of "War Horse" was a fiasco: it ran more than three hours, and stretches of dialogue were in German, leaving the audience confounded. "Nick Hytner got quite frustrated with us," Elliott recalled. "He basically said, 'You've got to get your acts together, otherwise you're going to bring the National Theatre into a million pounds of debt!'" During three years of workshops, the creators perfected Joey, who was made of aluminum, leather, and cane. "The puppet became more articulate in terms of showing how it felt," Elliott said. "The movement of the ears and the flicking of the tail and the articulation of the limbs. The three puppeteers and the horse became like a synchronized being." Elliott shepherded the show to Lincoln Center, where it ran for nearly two years, and then to Toronto, Sydney, and Berlin. In London, it drew the interest of Steven Spielberg (who adapted it as a film) and of Queen Elizabeth, who invited Joey to Windsor Castle for her ninetieth birthday.

"The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time" also had an unconventional narrator. Mark Haddon's novel is told from the perspective of Christopher, a fifteen-year-old boy with Asperger's syndrome who is trying to solve the murder of a neighborhood dog. Simon Stephens, who wrote the play, asked Elliott to read it as a friend. "I knew once she read it she wouldn't want anybody else to direct it, so it was slightly sneaky on my part," he said. He was right—Elliott seized on it. Working with the designer Bunny Christie and the movement company Frantic Assembly, she immersed the audience in Christopher's mind. In one scene, he runs away to a train station. Elliott externalized his sensory overload: gigantic signage flashing across the "Tron"-like set, cacophonous rave music, and darkened figures who randomly lift Christopher in the air. Elliott called it "an abstract piece of ballet."

The show was performed in the round in the National's smallest space, where spectators watched Christopher's imagination play out on the stage floor. Chris Harper, who was a producer there, was certain that the show could have a commercial life, but Elliott couldn't picture it in a proscenium theatre. He convinced her over several bottles of wine. "There was a reticence: 'What if it doesn't work?'" Harper recalled. "It was a real tug-of-war." Eventually, Elliott said, "we found a way, because in the design there are lots of boxes, little white boxes that are containers of his thoughts, I suppose. And so we made the whole show like a box of his thoughts, of his brain." The play reopened at the Apollo Theatre, in the West End, in March, 2013; the *Times* critic Ben Brantley compared it to "War Horse" in "its ability to create a theatrical world that somehow feels more lifelike than life itself."

A month later, Hytner announced that he would step down from the National. Elliott was an obvious contender for the position, but she took herself out of the running. "She said very simply that she had a life, a young daughter, other priorities," Hytner told me. (The job went to Rufus Norris.) Even with two hits under her belt, Elliott was still crippled by self-doubt. "I was thinking, What am I going to put my head above the parapet for?" she told me. "What do I really want to do? I was at a point where I thought, Should I give it up? Should I stop directing? And I went totally the other way. I set up my own company."

The day after the first Broadway preview of "Millennium Approaches," Elliott was back at her tech table in Row G. "Last night was quite hairy," she reported. "Nathan's phone wasn't working. The walls on the revolve fell during the first act. It finished late, because the interval was long. But they'll get tighter."

Onstage was a men's bathroom, the site of Act I, Scene 6. Louis—Prior's nebbishy boyfriend, a quasi avatar of Kushner—is crying over a sink when he meets Joe, a closeted Mormon lawyer. Lee Pace, who plays Joe, took the stage with James McArdle, the burly Glaswegian playing Louis. McArdle spoke in a thick burr that made it hard to imagine him as a Jewish New Yorker, but when the two men ran the scene he morphed instantly from Fat Bastard into Woody Allen. (In London, Elliott told me, the cast had the help of a dialect coach and "three different rabbis.") At one point, Joe hands Louis some toilet paper. "There's something about the tissue paper," Elliott observed. "Because you've learned by now—"

"There's probably AIDS going on," Pace said.

She nodded. "So be slightly careful about how you hand the tissue paper," she said. "Maybe you just hold it on the corner." More actors drifted in: Denise Gough, who plays Harper, Joe's wife, thanked Elliott for bringing them all vitamins. ("I took nine of them!") The actors agreed that the audience had reacted well—especially to the jokes about Republicans, which didn't get the same laughs in London.

As the crew fiddled with the set, the cast gathered around Elliott's table, where she kept a thick binder. (Kushner told me of their meetings, "She brought these huge director's notebooks that looked like the Talmud. At the center of each page was a little piece of the script, and then diagrams and charts all around it.") She ran through her notes from the night before. In the scene where Louis has sex with a stranger in Central Park, McArdle had growled his line "Infect me. I don't care." "I loved it," Elliott told him. "You do care. You want death." During Louis's Act III rant about American democracy, McArdle had crossed and uncrossed his legs too many times. In a scene between Joe and Harper, Gough had underplayed a moment of tension: "When you say, 'You never should have married me'—you can really attack there."

Gough worried aloud that she had been crying too much: "I try to hold it back, but I'm not always able to."

"I'll look at it tonight," Elliott said. "If the tears happen as a subsidiary thing, they happen. As long as you play your action."

They took a break, and Elliott went back to her binder. Earlier, describing the play's characters, she had told me, "They all feel like they're under a weight of expectation. They should be behaving a certain way, and they can't. Or something should be happening to them and it's not. Or something shouldn't be happening to them and it is." ♦

SHOUTS & MURMURS



THE BRITISH MUSEUM OF YOUR STUFF

BY IAN FRAZIER

From an exhibition on display in the British Museum's Permanent and Non-Returnable Collection of American Antiquities and Near-Antiquities:

OBJECT 1-A: Rawlings baseball glove, circa 1959. While on a collecting trip in search of artifacts in a remote part of the American interior known as Ohio, William Fitzmorris, fifth Earl of Litchfield, discovered this mint-condition example of a "ball mitt" lying in plain sight just inside the back door of a single-family home. Shipped with a crate of similar acquisitions, the item was catalogued and entered irretrievably into the museum's holdings in 1960.

OBJECT 1-B: Schwinn "Roadmaster" boy's bicycle, bright blue with white detailing, circa 1962. This museum-quality velocipede of American manufacture was stumbled upon by Sir Chauncey Peakes, K.B.E., as he was studying small-village bicycle racks in search of clues to the indigenous cultures left unlocked. Finding the rare two-wheeler propped negligently against a tree, Sir Chauncey quickly stowed it in the back of his archeologist's van and air-freighted it to London, so that it would not fall into the hands of the French.

OBJECT 1-C: Baseball card issued by Topps Bubble Gum Company (Woody Held, Cleveland Indians shortstop), 1964. In the course of a hot and sweaty midsummer dig in a hard-to-reach Ohio dwelling-place closet while the inhabitants were carelessly out, Martin Smythe, of the museum's near-antiquities staff, spotted this priceless treasure and plucked it up straightaway. Chain of continuous possession being impossible to establish, the ownership of the object has reverted firmly and decisively to the museum.

OBJECT 1-D: The Enderbee Stereo. This superb example of an American stereo was discovered in a crudely furnished dormitory room during winter break in 1971 by Arturo St. Ides, the tenth Lord Enderbee, while on an international expedition looking for things that belonged to other people. In the interest of science and the preservation of human heritage, he let us purchase it rather than disposing of it with a dealer in hot goods, where it would be lost. The Enderbee Stereo, one of the finest works of that important period, is now wholly owned by us.

OBJECT 2-A: Of particular interest is this 1975 Ford Maverick automobile, which Cecil Fisk-Weatherford Jones, antiquarian and museum trustee, came upon and hot-wired in a supermarket car park in one of the New England states circa 1979. Having gutted this remarkable find for parts, each of which told a story about bygone times, Fisk-Weatherford Jones arranged for the museum to acquire the remainder. The cinder blocks supporting each corner are contemporary to the period.

OBJECTS 3-B AND 3-C: Dame Helen Gothschild, while on a collecting trip in the American Rocky Mountains, sensed the presence of these lightweight hiking boots inside a poorly secured storage locker used by patrons of Big Sky Resort, near Butte, Montana, and painstakingly made off with them. The original owner, who, having stowed the boots while he skied with rental boots and skis, had to return home in his stocking feet—too bad. Boots of this type are no longer manufactured, and the museum intends never to part with these, whether the original owner produces the sales slip and notarized photographs of himself wearing the boots or not.

OBJECT 3-E: Wallet, leather, circa 2017. A team of museum experts obtained this almost new wallet by jostling a tourist on a Nevsky Prospekt trolleybus in St. Petersburg, Russia, and relieving him of it—tough cheese on him. In daily use, a wallet such as this would have held paper money, credit cards, and irreplaceable family photographs, all of which staffers have employed appropriately or thrown into a convenient dumpster as part of the curatorial process.

INTERACTIVE EXHIBIT: In this display, museumgoers are invited to put on headphones and listen to us having a hearty laugh at your expense. The first "ha-ha-ha" you hear belongs to Adrian Ffoulks, the director of the museum, who allows himself a rare but heartfelt chuckle. The subsequent belly laughs are from our board of trustees, who appreciate the comedy of watching you try to get any of "your" possessions back (good luck!), followed by a paroxysm of hilarity from the throats of our amply funded legal department. We hope you have enjoyed your visit. Now run along. ♦

LUCI GUTIÉRREZ

ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

HIP-HOP'S NEW FRONTIER

88rising is carving out space for Asians in pop culture.

BY HUA HSU



A few years ago, Kris Wu decided that he wanted to be known as a rapper. Wu, who is twenty-six, grew up in Canada and in China, where he is famous as an actor, singer, and model. In middle school, he had become a devotee of N.B.A. basketball and, subsequently, of hip-hop. After a stint in the Korean pop group EXO, he became a judge on "Rap of China," a hugely successful reality show about aspiring rappers. (His catchphrase, delivered in Mandarin, was "Do you even freestyle?") Like many Asian superstars, who are mobbed at home yet walk around Manhattan in relative anonymity, he wanted to measure himself against American artists.

In February, 2016, Wu played in the celebrity game at the N.B.A.'s All-Star Weekend, in Toronto. There, he met Sean Miyashiro. A few months earlier, Miyashiro had raised money to start 88rising, a company that he pitched as "Vice for Asian culture." For decades, hip-hop has been central to young Americans' understanding of what is cool, and Miyashiro knew that, increasingly, this was also the case in Asia. He wanted to document that culture, but he wanted to make things that shaped it, too. That summer, when Wu was working on music in Los Angeles, Miyashiro connected him with the Houston rapper Travis Scott. It wasn't hard to persuade Scott to work with him. "This motherfucker right here," Scott recalled, referring to Wu, "called me from a long-distance number and was, like, 'Ayo, I got this joint for you.' And I was, like, 'Ayo, motherfucker, I seen you in like a hundred movies.'"

Last October, at the 88rising offices in New York, Miyashiro and Wu were preparing for the release of "Deserve," the result of the collaboration. On the track, Wu and Scott list the various forms of attention that their women warrant, including a spot on a club's guest list, a French kiss, and the song itself. Wu adopts Scott's signature style, which is melodic, sleazy, and heavily reliant on Auto-Tune. Miyashiro was anxious to see how the single would be received. "It's how to sell a thought," he said, of promoting the song. "A new perception. That's the opportunity for Kris, and for us as a company." Asian fans rarely see their stars venture outside their regional hip-hop ecosystems, let alone stand alongside an established figure like Scott. "But, if they see someone that looks like them do it, then it changes the whole perception, just like Obama did for African-Americans," Miyashiro said. "Now you can really be fuckin' anything."

Against a backdrop of twentysomethings draped in minimalist streetwear, Miyashiro, who was wearing a fitted shirt with a dark floral pattern and a baseball cap with a fluorescent stripe, looked only slightly more adult. He's thirty-six, but his wispy mustache and sideburns make him look much younger. As he moved around the office, he stopped to peer over the shoulder of an employee who was experimenting with a logo typeface. "I want that to look like a hologram, like on New Era caps," he told him. Everyone was praised as "fire," a "badass," or, occasionally, a "genius."

In just two years, 88rising, which also has an office in Los Angeles and a small team in Shanghai, has become an authority on how to create Asian and American pop-culture crossovers. The company understands how to sell

"This is a global culture whether anyone likes it or not," Sean Miyashiro said.

ILLUSTRATION BY KRISTIAN HAMMERSTAD

Asian artists, like Wu, to American audiences. Similarly, it offers a vision of Asian cool to industries—music, advertising, fashion, television—that are desperate to be cool in Asia. Jonathan Park, a Korean-American rapper who performs as Dumbfoundead, has been associated with 88rising since its beginning. "Everybody wants to get into Asia," he told me. Miyashiro, he added, had been "pulling that card early on and selling people on that Asia dream."

"There's this kind of contagious optimism about his vision," Jeremy Erlich, an executive at Interscope Records, told me about Miyashiro. "I think, to a large extent, Western music companies see the huge potential in China and are really focussed on cracking the code."

On the floor of Miyashiro's office is a neon 88rising logo, which features the number 88 and the Chinese characters for "rising." In Chinese, eighty-eight means "double happiness." (To neo-Nazis, the number has come to stand for "Heil Hitler.") His glass desk is so long that it barely fits in the room, but there are no papers on it. ("Why would we need paper, bro?" he said.) On the walls are framed photos of 88rising's core roster: Joji, a Japanese-born singer whose graceful and heartbroken music belies his past as a hugely successful YouTube comedian; Keith Ape, a Korean rapper known for his rowdy, shrill style; the Higher Brothers, a streetwear-obsessed rap group from China who named themselves for the Chinese electronics giant Haier; and Brian Imanuel, an Indonesian rapper known as Rich Chigga. Though Wu was probably more famous than all of them put together, it was a world that he wanted to be a part of. "Where's my picture, bro?" Wu asked politely, as he squeezed behind Miyashiro's desk. He was dressed casually, with only subtle allusions to his trendy tastes—a Supreme x TNF baseball cap, rare Nikes—and was accompanied by his mother, his manager, and a couple of friends.

Miyashiro believed that Wu had a rare chance to penetrate the American rap charts, as long as he was careful. Wu's team had initially wanted him to appear on shows like "Good Morning America." Miyashiro told me, "I'm, like, 'Bro, that's not gonna mean shit. That's not gonna do a goddam thing for you, bro.'" Instead, he had a strategy for getting Wu all the "dope press looks" at hip-hop-oriented outlets like XXL and Complex.

"Deserve" was scheduled to première on Zane Lowe's show on Beats 1, Apple Music's streaming-radio service, and Wu began to record videos on Instagram to promote the song. He looked at himself in his phone's camera and tried to find the best angle. He recited the script, throwing in his own ad-libs. ("Ye-e-eah," "Love, love.") It felt a little stiff, so Miyashiro ran through the lines a few times, and Wu mimicked his swaggering intonation.

The next day, Miyashiro sat in a small conference room with a few employees. His assistant projected her computer onto a screen. There were about thirty tabs open. Miyashiro wanted to see the rate at which people were tweeting about the song, which Lowe would be playing in minutes. "Does anybody have Apple Music?" he said. "Where does Zane Lowe play?"

Hip-hop Web sites began posting about the song. "Oh, shit," Miyashiro said. "Pitchfork just fuckin' posted it. That's wild shit. God damn." It was twelve-thirty. They waited for Travis Scott to wake up, so that he could tweet about the single.

Wu, his mother, and his manager monitored the song's progress on their phones between promotional appearances. They were in an Uber when it reached the top of the charts, and they looked up and screamed. Wu was the first Chinese artist ever to top iTunes' rap charts, and the second Asian, after Psy, whose "Gangnam Style" was a novelty hit in 2012. Wu also became a top trending topic on the Chinese social-media network Weibo.

At 88rising's offices, Miyashiro was too exhausted to bask in this new success. He was overseeing the song's global distribution, its promotion across a range of social platforms, and an arsenal of related memes. He flopped down on the couch in his office and tried to post a picture on 88rising's Instagram account, but it wasn't working. It was strange, he said, because Instagram had verified the account that morning. He found the e-mail and showed it to me. I pointed out that it was a phishing scam; the account was being controlled by a hacker. "It's fuckin' up my whole vibe right now," he exclaimed. As some no-name rappers from the Bay Area diverted 88rising's Instagram traffic to their own account, I asked if 88rising had any cybersecurity protocols. "Shit," Miyashiro said, lightening up for a moment. "We're too hip-hop for that."

Miyashiro has a hard time explaining what, exactly, 88rising does. We were eating curry at a Japanese restaurant around the corner from the office. "C.A.A. has talent," he said. "They're an agent business. Vice has a great media platform." Before finishing his thought, he looked down at his phone and laughed, and asked if he could take the call. The screen read "Migos," the popular Atlanta rap group. After a short conversation, in which every sentence was punctuated with "bro," he switched back to cogent C.E.O.-speak. "People from the business world say, 'Hey, Sean, you should start positioning your company as this new hybrid media company that can play in these different mediums and make it work together.' I'm, like, 'Yeah, that's what we're doing.'"

Miyashiro's ascent is a symbol of the current tumult in the music industry. Recording sales are on a permanent decline, but there's still money to be made from catchy songs, particularly if you have a vision for whom to collaborate with, or how to reach new markets. Like a traditional talent-management company, 88rising oversees the careers of a few rappers and singers, and, like a record label, it releases and distributes music. Like a media startup, it produces video content for its artists and other clients. These videos are inventive and polished, ranging from short, viral memes and commercials to music videos and feature-length documentaries. They do basic things in a clever way, from interviews in virtual-reality settings to live performances in Koreatown

karaoke bars. (One of the best features the rapper Lil Yachty trying to freestyle over a song by the K-pop group Big Bang.)

Miyashiro was raised in San Jose, California. His father, who is Japanese, worked as a mechanical engineer, and his mother, who is Korean, mostly stayed at home. Miyashiro went to the type of Silicon Valley high school that has a sizable and competitive Asian-American population, and where most students go on to four-year colleges. But he lacked focus. He spent a lot of time hanging out with friends whom he describes as "wannabe" Asian gangsters, looking tough in the parking lots of bubble-tea cafés.

Miyashiro enrolled at San Jose State University, but he would often drive to campus, circle the parking lot, and, if he couldn't find a space, go home. One day, he realized that the university's student clubs staged concerts. He visited African-American fraternities and Asian Christian groups, and began putting on the shows they wanted to see. He also started to throw warehouse parties in Santa Clara. He stopped attending classes, and he turned his work as a campus promoter into a string of marketing jobs in the Bay Area, including one for what he describes as a "social network for hipsters." Eventually, he helped to launch Thump, Vice's onetime electronic-music site, where he brokered deals for corporate sponsors eager to align themselves with dance culture.

In 2015, Miyashiro left Thump, looking for his next challenge. One day, Jonathan Park, whom he'd begun managing, showed him the video for Keith Ape's "It G Ma," an appealingly jagged and raw rap song. Miyashiro and Park got on FaceTime with Keith Ape, who was in South Korea, and persuaded him to come to the South by Southwest talent showcase, in Austin, Texas. Soon, Miyashiro was Ape's manager, too. Miyashiro drew on his industry contacts and, for a little less than ten thousand dollars, got Waka Flocka, A$AP Ferg, and Father to record a remix of "It G Ma" with Keith Ape and Park. Around this time, Miyashiro told a friend over dinner at Quarters Korean BBQ, in Los Angeles, that he wanted to build something. That night, the friend connected him to Allen DeBevoise, of Third Wave Partners, who became his first backer. "It was mad easy, bro," Miyashiro told me. "It was easy as fuck. I'm being dead serious."

DeBevoise shared Miyashiro's belief that a portal for Asian culture could serve both a long-ignored audience and the mainstream. "I heard his vision, and I said, 'This is it,'" De-



Bevoise recalled. "I was sold, probably, in twenty minutes."

"One of Sean's strongest qualities is selling the dream," Donnie Kwak, the 88rising Web site's first editor, recently told me. Kwak had worked at traditional media companies such as Complex and ESPN, and the idea of devoting himself to something Asian was appealing.

The new company had money, but for months Miyashiro, Kwak, and a handful of employees couldn't decide where to devote their resources: videos or essays, short form or investigative features, content production or artist management. They built a couple of Web sites but didn't publish them. Miyashiro was now living in student housing in the Bronx with his wife, a graduate student in virology at Einstein College. He worked out of a Dunkin' Donuts nearby, and took meetings in his car. "It was f— I was about to say it was fire," he told me, growing solemn. "It wasn't fire. It was what it was. We didn't know what the fuck it was going to be."

In early 2016, Brian Imanuel, as Rich Chigga, released a video for a rap song called "Dat Stick." Over a menacing, squelching beat, Imanuel, a scrawny Asian with an exceptionally deep voice, fantasizes about driving a Maserati and killing cops. The song went viral, in part because of how incongruous (in the video, Imanuel wears a pink polo shirt and a fanny pack) and outrageous (he uses the N-word) it was. Imanuel, who was homeschooled in Jakarta, says that he learned English by watching YouTube videos. Miyashiro and Park, who had been following Imanuel on Vine, called him and offered to fly him to South by Southwest to perform. Imanuel said that he'd have to ask his mother—he was sixteen years old. She agreed, but he was unable to get a visa.

At the festival, Miyashiro, Park, and some 88rising employees set up a "shrine"—decorated with plants, Chinese guardian-lion statues, and candles—in an Austin warehouse, where they booked a string of up-and-coming rappers to perform and be interviewed. Behind the camera, Miyashiro asked them about their favorite anime characters, their impressions of Asia, and their reactions to a series of videos by Asian rappers, including Imanuel's.

88rising uploaded its first video to YouTube in May, 2016. It was a clip of the Brooklyn rapper Desiigner's "Panda," filmed at the shrine, with Chinese subtitles—a cute, if self-exoticizing, way for 88rising to emphasize its Asian identity.

When "Dat Stick" went viral, it seemed like a testament to how easy it had become to make vaguely authentic-sounding rap music. Fans saw it as either a well-executed novelty hit or a well-aimed prank. Though Imanuel was a fluid, nimble rapper, the song didn't fetishize black culture as much as it frolicked within an outlandish, sex-and-violence-obsessed version of it; it ended up feeling like mockery.

But Miyashiro believed that Imanuel was a kid from the other side of the world who didn't know any better. Imanuel had joined Twitter when he was ten, and he had always been drawn to irreverent humor. As the song grew more popular, he became apologetic about his use of the N-word, which he eventually promised never to use again, and also about his name, which he felt stuck with. Miyashiro did not dismiss the idea that people would find the name Rich Chigga offensive—some of them were on his

staff—but, he told me in an e-mail, "this is a global culture whether anyone likes it or not and nobody can stop someone from loving something."

For his follow-up, Imanuel wanted to release a song called "Hold My Strap." But Miyashiro was afraid that another dose of gunplay make-believe would permanently entrench him as little more than a meme. Miyashiro felt that it would be smarter to release a video, made to address the "Dat Stick" controversy, called "Rappers React to Rich Chigga." While people on Twitter argued about whether "Dat Stick" appropriated black culture, the reaction video posed a complicated question: What if other rappers liked "Dat Stick"? When the video begins, many of the rappers seem confused, even speechless. "He even found a way to say 'nigga' without saying it," Meechy Darko, a member of Brooklyn's Flatbush Zombies, says. "They dead-ass serious?" 21 Savage asks, as Imanuel and his friends wave guns and mug at the camera. But, by the song's end, they welcome him as a colleague. "This shit is fire," Meechy Darko says. "I see the comedic side," Cam'ron says, but "what he was spittin' was dope. His flow was tough." Ghostface volunteers to do a remix with him.

There are other businesses trying to mediate between Asian and American music culture. Zhong.tv, a media company focussed on China's "urban millennials," offers a more direct portal into Chinese hip-hop. The recently launched Banana Culture is an experiment in merging traditional K-pop management with a media company, and it is linked to the Wanda Group, one of China's largest entertainment conglomerates.

But 88rising is distinguished by its idiosyncratic tone and its up-to-the-nanosecond appreciation of hip-hop's youthful, Internet-driven trends. In the year and a half since "Rappers React to Rich Chigga," the company has gone from documenting these underworlds to becoming a part of them. The staff began collaborating with new rappers such as XXXTentacion, Ski Mask the Slump God, and Killy. This was good business, and it also lent 88rising, as a predominantly Asian company in hip-hop, a kind of credibility. Its artists often borrow from the idioms of black culture, but in a way that's increasingly detached from the music's originating streets and struggles. Instead, their sensibility celebrates the free flow of the Internet, in which cultural crossovers should be fast, frictionless, and shorn of historical context.

Hip-hop is 88rising's core, but its periphery is always changing. Despite the global popularity of Japanese anime, Korean pop music, and Korean e-sports competitions, 88rising has been judicious about how it interacts with these preëxisting markers of Asian popular culture. Its early videos featured Asian beauty vloggers, electronic-dance-music d.j.s, and a radiantly weird philosopher-bodybuilder named Frank Yang. There are hypnotic videos starring a renowned Japanese mixologist whose cocktails resemble tiny terrariums, and a series in which a sushi chef makes *onigiri*—rice balls—that resemble the rapper Lil Uzi Vert or the K-pop star G-Dragon. Recently, 88rising began chiselling away at its dude-centric world view, hosting videos featuring the Korean-American dance producer and singer Yaeji, the Korean-American rock musician Japanese Breakfast, and the Japanese pop singer Rina Sawayama. This year, Miyashiro began managing the R. & B. singer AUGUST 08, the company's first non-Asian act.

Miyashiro said that the harshest critics of 88rising are often Asian-Americans. "Asian-Americans my age are typically scared," he told me. "And when something starts to penetrate, like we are, for whatever reason, the Asian-Americans are most skeptical." Given the relative scarcity of Asian-Americans in popular culture, it's understandable that expectations fall on those with some degree of clout—witness the anxieties that surrounded the success of the comedian Margaret Cho, in the nineties, or of the rapper Jin, in the two-thousands. Both were scrutinized by fellow Asian-Americans, many

of whom were worried that they would bring negative representations to a broader audience. Miyashiro said, "They're, like, fearful of making sure that we don't offend anyone. Making sure that we're staying safe. Making sure we don't appropriate anything."

He mentioned Niki, an Indonesian R. & B. singer who knew Imanuel in Jakarta. In a video that she had collaborated on with 88rising, the object of her affection is white. "There were these Reddit threads about this guy," Miyashiro said. "Being, like—I'm not joking—'What's up with 88rising having this white-male-Asian-female-type fetish shit?' Some wild shit, bro." Miyashiro said that, at the 88rising offices, the controversy reminded staffers of the power they had to shape perceptions of Asian people. But he noted that some of the Asian-American men in the office argued that it was up to those who felt emasculated to, as he said, "do something about it and be fuckin' fire."

Miyashiro's assistant, a twenty-three-year-old from Queens named Cynthia Guo, told me, "I think, growing up, I was always made to feel that Asian culture wasn't cool." On her desk was a stack of classic Asian-American history books, including Ronald Takaki's "Strangers from a Different Shore" and Helen Zia's "Asian American Dreams," which she had read in college. When she found an internship posting for 88rising, she said, it was "like a dream come true," adding, "There was no one brand I could pinpoint as this really cool Asian thing until 88rising."

Phil Chen, an adviser at Horizons Ventures, an investment firm in Hong Kong, was one of 88rising's early backers. He told me that he had been initially skeptical of the company, because of its narrow focus on Asian and Asian-American culture. "I think the goal with assimilation, or trying to fit into the dominant culture, is you don't try to marginalize yourself," he said. But, after Keith Ape and Rich Chigga were embraced by non-Asian audiences, he began to see things differently. Maybe 88rising could help Asians feel less "inferior," he said, about their peripheral status in Western culture. Whenever he finds himself in an Uber in the U.S., he enjoys playing the driver songs by 88rising's artists. "They flip out," he says. "It's just so fun for me, as an Asian, to see an Asian voice being celebrated."

MEDITATION ON BEAUTY

There are days I think beauty has been exhausted
but then I read about the New York subway cars that,

dumped into the ocean, have become synthetic reefs.
Coral gilds the stanchions, feathered with dim Atlantic light.

Fish glisten, darting from a window into the sea grass
that bends around them like green flames—

this is human-enabled grace. So maybe there's room
in the margin of error for us to save ourselves

from the trends of self-destruction.
Or maybe such beauty is just another distraction,

stuffing our hearts with its currency, paraded for applause.
Here, in the South, you can hear applause

coming from the ground: even the buried are divided.
At the bottom of the Gulf, dark with Mississippi silt,

rests the broken derrick of an oil rig—and isn't oil
also beautiful? Ancient and opaque, like an allegory

that suggests we sacrifice our most beloved. Likely
ourselves. In one photograph, a sea turtle skims its belly

across a hull, unimpressed with what's restored,
barely aware of the ocean around it growing warm.

—*J. Estanislao Lopez*

Before I started hanging out with Miyashiro, I had never truly understood what it means for "creative" to become a noun. Creatives can make a piece of art or an advertisement, but it's all the same, as long as it makes culture. They work toward outcomes rather than from intentions. (There was a moment when someone mentioned Breitbart, which Miyashiro had never heard of. He was interested in learning if its Web site did video in addition to written pieces.) As much time as I spend on the Internet, I had never felt so attuned to its whims as when Miyashiro would describe an idea so good that it was obviously destined to go viral. And the next time I visited it would have happened—it would be part of the culture.

In late October, Miyashiro was at the office, preparing for the company's annual board meeting. It was dinnertime, but everyone was working late on his presentation. Miyashiro said, "I can't decide whether to come professional or swag the fuck out on them." He had news: he had just returned from Los Angeles, where he had discussed a partnership with a major record label that would insure much of his company's autonomy. "It's so sick," he said. "It's the sickest deal ever."

I asked if 88rising was a profitable business. Miyashiro thought about it for a moment. "In this game, it's more value-based or projection-based," he said. "I don't even know if profitable means much in this shit anymore. Are you making revenue? Are you scal-

ing your audience?" 88rising's fans are a constant preoccupation of Miyashiro's. "They take ownership," he said. "No one's going to walk around and get a Complex tattoo, or a Vice tattoo. People are getting 88rising tattoos. *On their body, bro*. That's how we're different."

Around the time when Miyashiro and his team were working on Kris Wu's single, another 88rising artist, Joji, who was born George Miller, appeared on "Hot Ones," a popular Internet interview show in which guests answer questions while eating increasingly spicy chicken wings. Within a day, and with minimal promotion, it was one of the top trending videos on YouTube. Joji was formerly a YouTube skit-and-prank comedian famous for his characters Filthy Frank (a squawking, anti-P.C., antisocial nerd with a self-destructive streak) and Pink Guy (a sex-positive Lycra-clad alien with the same predilection for destruction, only he rapped, too). Joji was perhaps best known for his "Harlem Shake" meme, from 2013, which is set to Baauer's song of the same name. The thirty-five-second video begins with Pink Guy and three costumed friends thrusting their hips robotically, as the song rises toward a wobbly climax. When the beat drops, everyone begins dancing wildly, as though trying to convulse out of their clothes. At the height of the popularity of "Harlem Shake," more than four thousand tribute videos were uploaded to YouTube every day. Ethan Klein, who runs the YouTube comedy channel H3H3, described Joji as the best YouTuber of all time.

But, for the past two or three years, Joji had just been going through the motions of his clownish career, turned off, he said, by the increasingly "toxic" Internet. He had begun recording music that was languid and uncontrollably sad, somewhat reminiscent of the British singer James Blake. But he occasionally wondered if the closest he'd come to committing to a music career were the novelty rap albums that he recorded as Pink Guy.

"Sean pulled me out of that slump," Joji said. He had come to 88rising to discuss making viral videos, but when Miyashiro heard his demos he suggested that they focus on Joji's music.

Last fall, Joji and Miyashiro were at a studio in Brooklyn, working on a new song, tentatively called "Rising," featuring Wu, Imanuel, Baauer, and the rapper Trippie Redd. "Bro, it's inspiring shit," Miyashiro said. But Wu had recorded a new verse for it, which took up nearly half the song, and they had to figure out how to work around it.

Joji's début EP, "In Tongues," was scheduled to be released the following day. As Miyashiro and the studio engineer discussed ways to restructure "Rising," Joji bounced between his social-media accounts unconsciously, like an ex-smoker with permanently fidgety hands. "When I was heavy on the Internet, I was checking everything," he said. "Stats, everything. Because in that world your value is determined by your numbers." He was earnest, gracious, polite—qualities that his YouTube personae might have mocked.

Joji and Miyashiro brainstormed ideas for viral content to promote "In Tongues." "When something blows up, and you made it, it's fucking fulfilling," Miyashiro had told me. One of Joji's ideas for a meme involved a car full of tough "hood dudes" who are sobbing as his latest single plays. "Let's do that," Miyashiro said. He called a professional meme-maker, who suggested synchronizing the music to short, repetitive clips. "I just need you to tell me your concept for the meme," Miyashiro said to Joji, covering the receiver. Joji thought about it for a second. "Hard falls. Funny crying. Punching."

A few nights later, Joji headed to Irving Plaza, for the New York date of Brian Imanuel's first American tour. Imanuel's upcoming single, "Crisis," featured the grim, deadpan Atlanta rapper 21 Savage, who had been one of the more skeptical voices on "Rappers React to Rich Chigga." 21's music is fierce, lumbering, and largely joyless, the seeming opposite of Imanuel's bouncy, Internet-honed sense of wit. Now 21 was dancing alongside Imanuel in a

video, appearing to enjoy himself. "21 is cool, bro," Miyashiro told me. "He genuinely likes Rich and us."

In the first year that Imanuel and Miyashiro worked together, they mostly talked on the phone, which was complicated by the twelve-hour time difference between Jakarta and New York. They finally met last May, in Miami, where Imanuel performed at Rolling Loud, one of the biggest hip-hop festivals in the world. Backstage, Imanuel surprised the rapper Post Malone with a mariachi band that he had ordered using the mobile delivery service Post Mates. The band performed a buoyant rendition of Post Malone's single "Congratulations," and soon a video of the stunt was trending on social media. Miyashiro told me that the clip initially grew out of a discussion with Post Mates about making a short video featuring Imanuel using the company's app to book the band. But someone standing nearby had captured the entire thing on his cell phone and uploaded it himself, thwarting the plan.

From politics to the pop charts, one of the conditions of contemporary life is our inability to distinguish organic popularity from movements that have been carefully engineered. The work of making something go viral is largely invisible. The entertainment business has always worked this way—an illusion of popularity can beget actual popularity. But, in the Internet age, the velocity of change outpaces our ability to process and reflect on it. When you're constantly dealing with effects, rather than nursing skepticism about causes, the stakes seem much higher. The amateur video had accomplished the initial gag's aims: it got people to think about Post Mates, and it made Imanuel seem like a sweet, endearing kid.

At Irving Plaza, fans arrived six hours early to be the first ones inside. The crowd was young, jubilant, and diverse, heavy on college students in a range of streetwear trends, from futuristic, utilitarian chic to vintage rap T-shirts older than they were. They chanted "Chigga! Chigga!" before switching to "Brian! Brian!" "These aren't K-pop pretty-boy motherfuckers," Park told me, about 88rising's artists. "These are all the outcast, weirdo dudes. I think that's kinda refreshing, because I think every Asian's kinda felt like that, especially in America, whether you're an F.O.B. or a nerd, a weirdo, all these different things."

Imanuel sat in front of a mirror in his dressing room, flanked by Miyashiro and Joji. He stared at his reflection, dancing and rapping along to the d.j.'s music. He seems comfortable in his own skin, like someone who grew up making faces on Snapchat and Vine. He said that he was feeling a little homesick after being on the road for so long. "When I was thirteen, I was super obsessed with this country," he said. He had been in awe of the actors in the Indonesian action film "The Raid," who parlayed its success into playing bit parts in Hollywood blockbusters. He spoke with a soft deference, as though this were the voice he reserved for adults. "I've always wanted to come here. I've seen everything on the Internet, really. It feels like a second home."

Miyashiro, Joji, and Imanuel had a clubby rapport. The d.j. played Drake's "Know Yourself," and they began talking about how the chorus—"Runnin' through the 6 with my woes"—had been a perfect impetus for viral videos involving Drake's woes, or running. They discussed memes in the way that a previous generation might have dissected movies or an episode of a sitcom. When Imanuel was ready to take the stage, he removed his hoodie, revealing a T-shirt that featured an illustration of himself. The crowd sang along to all his lyrics and knew all his ad-libs. An audience member held up a framed photograph of Imanuel as if it were a devotional offering. As Imanuel danced and leaped across the stage, his small frame seemed to expand. He had recently turned eighteen, and a few members of 88rising's staff stood in the wings, ready to wheel a giant cake onstage. Joji, wearing a Limp Bizkit baseball jersey, came out and sang a couple of songs from his EP. It had been out for only a few days, but the audience sang along to his songs, too.

Shortly before the holidays, I met Miyashiro at his home, in a part of the Upper East Side where someone wearing a leather jacket with the words "Road to Nowhere" across the back, as he was, really stands out. We waited in the lobby of his apartment for one of his employees to deliver a Christmas tree.

Imanuel, Joji, Keith Ape, and the Higher Brothers were at the end of an Asian tour that had sold out quickly. Miyashiro wanted to do big things in 2018. 88rising had already sold out concerts in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. The staff were developing a television series. They are also working on a crew album called "88 Degrees and Rising," which Miyashiro



described as their version of Puff Daddy and the Family's "No Way Out," from 1997, which featured the Notorious B.I.G., Lil' Kim, and other artists on the Bad Boy label. 88rising also wanted to look into curating its own festivals, including one in China. Miyashiro was no longer managing the company's social-media accounts himself.

We ended up at a nearby Italian restaurant. "It's so fire, drinking hot soup with you," he said. He thought that, because I was from San Jose, too, I could appreciate the unlikeliness of his trajectory. "This is some New York shit."



Another translation of the Chinese homophone for eighty-eight is that it means "fortune and good luck." I asked Miyashiro how he would know if 88rising had succeeded. "I never have to be filthy rich," he said. "That's not why we're doing this shit. It's more about: How do we contain this purity of the brand?" 88rising had become an expression of Miyashiro—his style, his taste, his sense of humor. He didn't promote himself on a personal Twitter or Instagram account. Instead, he poured himself into 88rising. "I'd rather die than not continue this," he said. "I feel like I'm high all the time, even though I'm sober."

Miyashiro spent New Year's Eve at home. The next day, at 1 P.M., he posted on 88rising's Twitter account that Imanuel had changed his stage name to Brian. There was a link to an introspective new song called "See Me." I talked to Miyashiro about an hour later. In late December, Imanuel had announced that his début album, "Amen," would be coming out in February. The criticism around his name was fiercer than ever. After months of discussion, "he hit me up one morning," Miyashiro said. "He was, like, 'Yo, I want to change my name.' This was after we had had a million conversations. He sent me some screenshots of things that really got to him on Twitter. It finally made sense to him." A couple of days later, Imanuel changed his name again, this time to Rich Brian.

In mid-January, 88rising was finally ready to release the single showcasing Imanuel, Kris Wu, and Joji, alongside Baauer and Trippie Redd. It was now called "18." In the days leading up to its release, however, 88rising got caught in a social-media war among rabid pop fans in Asia. One of them had circulated an old 88rising image featuring a row of Asian flags, including that of Tibet, as a way of suggesting that the company was somehow anti-Chinese. It was a reminder of the cross-cultural knowledge required to credibly enter any Asian market. Around this time, Chinese censors began cracking down on rap lyrics, targeting some of the contestants who had been made famous by "Rap of China." Miyashiro decided that "18" wasn't worth the potential drama. He released the single quietly, with only light promotion. Wu and 88rising have not worked together since.

Miyashiro turned his attention to Imanuel's album, and, on February 2nd, "Amen" became the first album by an Asian artist to top iTunes' hip-hop charts. Given the novelty of "Dat Stick," few listeners could have anticipated the charm of "Amen," which is filled with moments of teen-age innocence—one track is about Imanuel losing his virginity—and earnest contentment. But Miyashiro had seen it all along. "Brian's a musical genius," he had told me the first time we met.

Just before the 88rising show at San Francisco's Warfield Theatre, Miyashiro texted to tell me that the reception to "Amen" was "a turning point for us." A few seconds later, he texted again: "Or another one." ♦

Slight Headache Department

From the Gloucester (Mass.) Daily Times.

Gloucester police responded to a call to open a pickle jar from a Heights of Cape Ann resident early Monday evening—restoring peace in the apartment complex.

The woman struggling with the pickle jar had been attempting to open it with a hammer, banging apparently loudly enough to disturb a downstairs neighbor. . . .

Police spoke to both residents about quieting down, opened the pickle jar—and cleared the scene.

PROFILES

CALIFORNIA V. TRUMP

Jerry Brown's attempt to moderate a radical White House.

BY CONNIE BRUCK

Early this month, Attorney General Jeff Sessions declared war on the State of California. At least that's the way many opponents of the Trump Administration saw it. Speaking to the California Peace Officers' Association in Sacramento, Sessions announced that the Department of Justice was suing the state for passing three laws to protect undocumented immigrants—measures, Sessions said, that "intentionally obstruct the work of our sworn immigration-enforcement officers." California, he continued, was endangering those officers and "advancing an open-borders philosophy shared by only the most radical extremists."

Jerry Brown, a Democrat, now in his fourth term as governor of California, reacted to Sessions with undisguised irritation. He had signed the most inflammatory of the laws—the so-called sanctuary-state law, which limits local and state coöperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement—only after demanding many changes. He wanted to insure that ICE would still be able to do its job. His contempt for the White House was palpable. "Look, we know the Trump Administration is full of liars," Brown told reporters. "They've pled guilty already to the special counsel." Brown was clearly agitated; his face was flushed, and he gestured with his left arm to emphasize his distress. "I would assume—this is pure speculation—that Jeff thinks that *Donald* will be happier with him, and I'm sure Donald will be tweeting his joy at this particular performance," Brown said. "But it's not about law enforcement, it's not about justice, and it really demeans the high office to which he's been appointed."

Few Democrats in such an influential job have spoken more intemperately about the Administration. And yet Brown steered away from the language of absolutism. To Sessions, Brown said, "I still put my hand out and say, 'I'll coöperate, Jeff, if you can get off this current maneuver you're on, because it's unbecoming.'" Later, Brown told me that the battle launched by Sessions would be complicated and prolonged. "Trump won't even be President by the time it gets to the Supreme Court," he said.

Despite his anger, Brown persists in his efforts to work with President Trump where possible. Five days after Sessions made his provocative speech in Sacramento, Brown released a letter to Trump, who was about to make his first Presidential trip to California, to view border-wall prototypes on the edge of San Diego. Trump has complained that "we don't have one fast train" in the United States; Brown wants to build a seventy-seven-billion-dollar bullet train from San Francisco to Los Angeles. He has petitioned the Administration to fund the project, which has long been debated in California; now he invited the President "to come aboard." Shortly after Brown sent the letter, he told me, "He likes high-speed rail. Ronald Reagan wanted to build high-speed rail. I think there's a real chance we'll get it, particularly if Democrats win the House."

This seemed optimistic. On March 13th, in San Diego, Trump, accompanied by Border Patrol agents, said that Brown "has done a very poor job running California. They have the highest taxes in the United States. The place is totally out of control. You have sanctuary cities where you have criminals." Brown replied on the President's favorite platform: "Thanks for the



Brown's manner is as idiosyncratic as ever, but he is more strategic and more focussed than he was in his first two terms as governor, from 1975 to 1983.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LARRY FINK

shout-out, @realDonaldTrump. But bridges are still better than walls. And California remains the 6th largest economy in the world and the most prosperous state in America. #Facts."

In Brown's first two terms as governor, from 1975 to 1983, he was called Governor Moonbeam, but the nickname (bestowed on him by Chicago's merciless columnist Mike Royko) never quite captured the complexity of his politics. Brown supported the environmental and anti-nuclear-proliferation movements, offering tax credits to individuals and corporations that relied on renewable energy, and backing a proposal to oppose the nuclear-arms race. He also, after campaigning against it, came to support Proposition 13, the infamous property-tax-cutting measure. Brown has said that he follows "the canoe theory" of politics: "You paddle a little on the left and a little on the right, and you paddle a straight course." His public image is similarly enigmatic: in the seventies, he dated Linda Ronstadt and Natalie Wood, and yet he managed to project the austerity of a monk.

Brown, who is seventy-nine, is about to serve his final year as governor. (Term limits prevent him from running for reëlection.) His manner is as idiosyncratic as ever, but he is more strategic and more focussed than he was in his first two terms. He has even come to embrace the old-school deal-making favored by his father, Pat Brown, who served as governor from 1959 to 1967. On climate legislation, Brown has collaborated with moderate Republicans, even when that has meant sacrificing the most far-reaching ambitions of some environmental groups. He also worked to make sure that the state's police chiefs would not oppose the "sanctuary-state" law.

Canoe politics has paid off. When Brown began his third term, in 2011, California had not recovered from the Great Recession. The state was running a deficit of twenty-seven billion dollars, unemployment was at twelve per cent, and its credit rating was the lowest of any state in the country. With help from a recovering economy, Brown balanced the budget, first through spending cuts and then with a temporary tax increase. Today, California is in the black and has even banked an emergency fund of eight billion dollars. Unemployment is less than five per cent. Still, there is nothing halcyon about Brown's vision of the future. At a press conference in January, he unveiled his valedictory budget proposal. Its centerpiece is an addition of five billion dollars to the emergency fund. Brown walked over to a blown-up cardboard graph and made clear that this was no cause for celebration. Pointing to the very end of a red bar that represented his term, he said, with a slight smile, "The next governor is going to be on the cliff. . . . What's out there is darkness, uncertainty, decline, and recession. So, good luck, baby!"

Brown has been ambivalent about dwelling on his apocalyptic vision. "If you talk too much, you're odd, they can't hear you," he told me, "but if you don't talk about it, then no one will know." For him, the "potential for doom" resides in two threats: climate change and the nuclear-arms race. "People may now be worried about North Korea, but not about the fact that Russia and America could get into a nuclear exchange," he told me. "The fact that in forty-five minutes it could be over is not a problem in the minds of ninety-nine-point-nine per cent of the people." He continued, "I'm just saying that human beings in 2018 are living with unimaginable powers of both creativity and utter, final destruction. That being the



case, a degree of wisdom and restraint and discipline and openness is absolutely required if we're going to make it and we're going to survive."

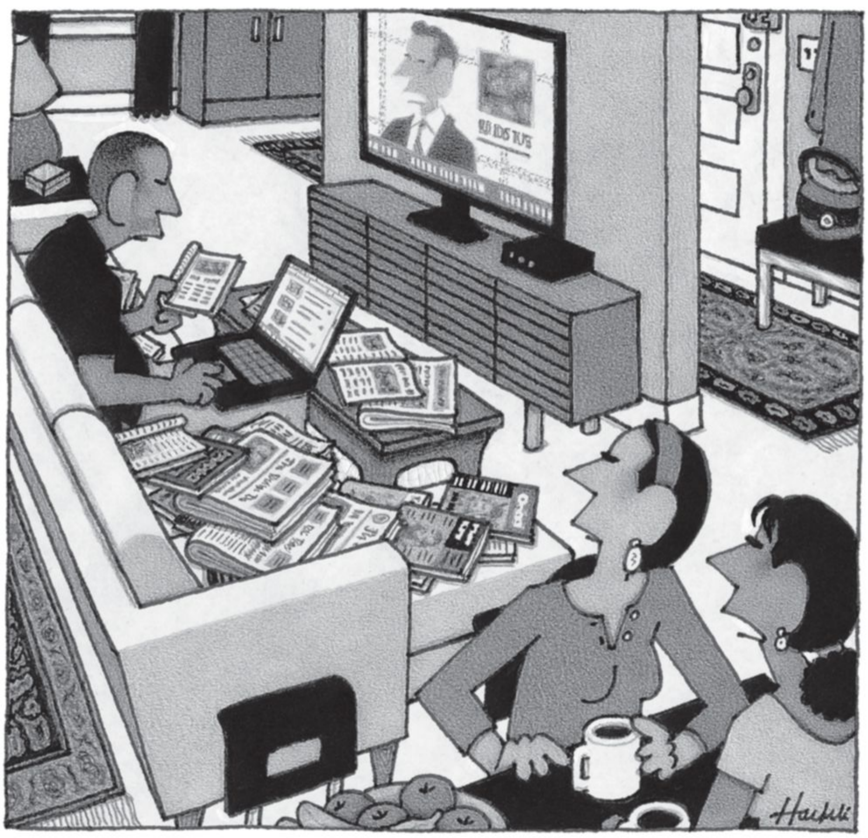
Brown also sees danger in the growing discord between Democrats and Republicans. "The last time we had that, we had the Civil War," he said. Infuriated by the President, California Democrats—such as Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom, who is leading the race to replace Brown, and State Senate leader Kevin de León, who is challenging Dianne Feinstein for her seat in the U.S. Senate—have argued that the state is a "sanctuary," and the antithesis of Trump's Washington. Brown's opposition to Trump is somewhat different. On occasion, he drops some "rhetorical bombs," as he has called them, but he prefers a measured, pragmatic approach. Brown rejects the idea that a state can offer sanctuary from the federal government, and he does not like to talk about "the Resistance," either.

"What is *that*?" Brown said. "People are striving to frame their campaigns rhetorically. But I'm not running a campaign. . . . I've criticized the President when I thought he was wrong, but my life doesn't revolve around Donald Trump."

In late December, I met with Brown at the governor's mansion, a three-story Victorian residence with a towering windowed cupola. A startling anachronism in downtown Sacramento, the mansion is separated from the street by a low iron fence with a locked gate. When a visitor arrives, a security official emerges from the house with a key.

Brown's parents, Pat and Bernice Brown, lived in the mansion throughout Pat Brown's two terms as governor. (In the seventies, Ronald Reagan lived in a house in the suburbs; Nancy Reagan had called the mansion a "firetrap.") Pat Brown had an expansive, optimistic view of California, and he believed in spending generously: on university campuses, on freeways, and on a vast water project that turned the Central Valley into one of the country's richest agricultural regions and helped Southern California flourish. In 1966, he ran for a third term but lost to Reagan, in his first run for political office.

When Pat Brown began his governorship, Jerry was twenty and a Jesuit novice, honoring vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In a photograph taken at his father's office, he is wearing a priest's black suit and Roman collar. After several years, Brown left the seminary and went to the University of California at Berkeley and then Yale Law School. In a recent interview with the political analyst David Axelrod, he recalled studying for the bar exam on the third floor of the governor's man-



"Warren serves as my aggregator."

sion and, to escape boredom, making his way down the winding staircase until he could eavesdrop on a political argument between his father and Jesse (Big Daddy) Unruh, the speaker of the Assembly. Jerry was transfixed. He thought, That's what I want to do.

Brown once said he was both "attracted and repelled" by the political discussions and machinations that took place in his parents' house. Nathan Gardels, who went to work for Brown in 1976, told me, "That may be true, but he was never indifferent. He can tell you how many votes Pat Brown got in San Luis Obispo County in 1954, in his race for attorney general. It's the family business, and he knows it thoroughly." Brown was more resistant to Pat's penchant for the time-honored campaign tradition of donning festive hats. Tom Quinn, Jerry's longtime campaign manager, recalled, "He'd go to a Mexican parade and wear a sombrero. Jerry said, 'No hats!' He was always rebelling against the old-fashioned kind of politics."

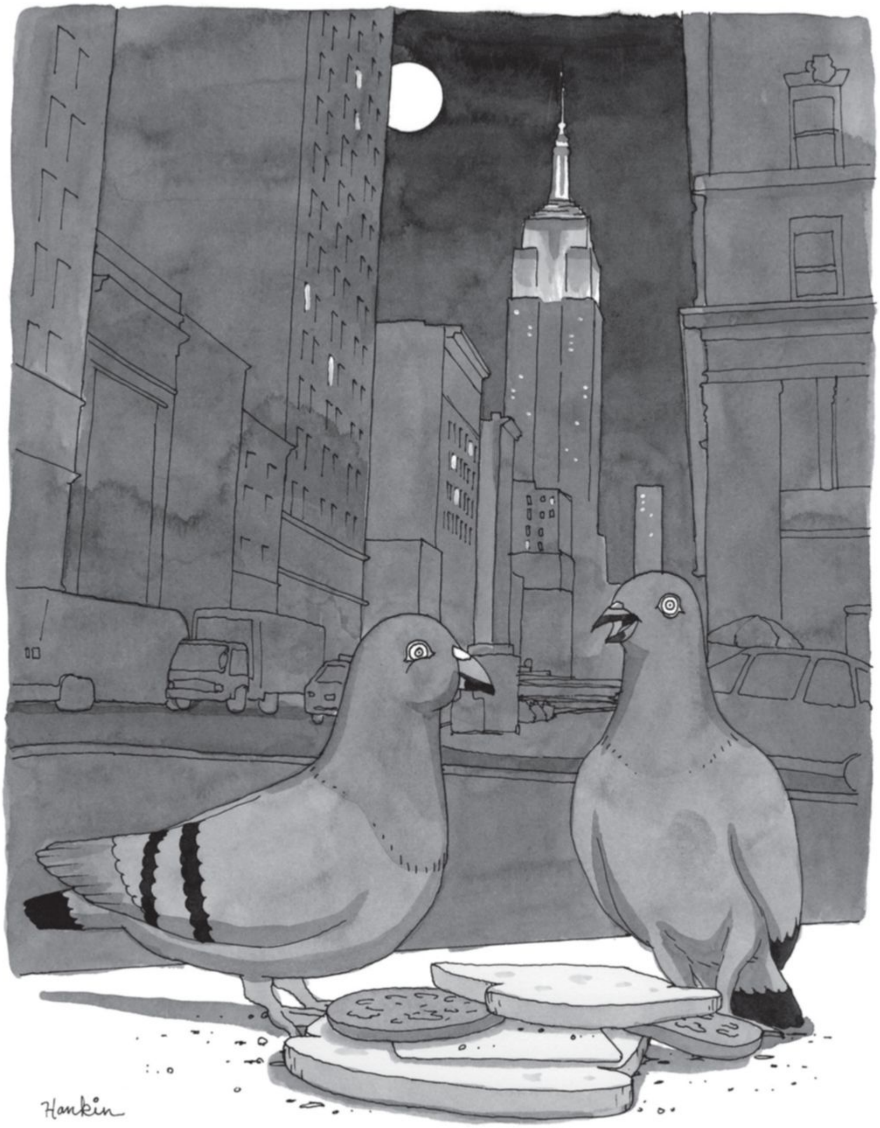
In 1970, Jerry Brown was elected California's secretary of state; there was no incumbent in his way. Four years later, Governor Reagan, preparing for a Presidential campaign, announced that he would not seek a third term. Brown, who was thirty-six, decided to enter the Democratic primary; three of his six opponents were leaders of the Party establishment. Quinn said, "Pat Brown took me to breakfast at the Polo Lounge and he told me, 'You're going to destroy my son's career.' He thought Jerry had no chance." But Jerry was running against corruption in state government. His inexperience became an advantage; his adversaries belonged to the world he wanted to clean up. "Jerry had an issue, clean government, which seemed kind of bland," Quinn said. "And then Watergate came along!" He won the primary by almost twenty points.

Brown took office in the midst of a recession. He believed that no public institution should be exempt from budget cuts, including some that his father had helped to build. When University of California officials resisted, he said that they had an "edifice complex." Gardels recalled that David Saxon, the university's president from 1975 to 1983, once told him, "Reagan distrusted public institutions. Jerry Brown distrusted all institutions." Tony Kline, a friend of Brown's from Yale, who was his legal-affairs secretary in his first two terms, said, "There is an ascetic aspect to him that is very genuine. He was quoting E. F. Schumacher"—the German economist, who had recently published a best-selling treatise on sustainable development—"talking about lowering expectations, driving around in his blue Plymouth. I think his message of 'Small is beautiful' did not really resonate in 1975, but it did establish his credibility as a person who has long adhered to the view that there is virtue in sacrifice."

Brown entered the Democratic Presidential primaries in 1976 and 1980, losing both times to Jimmy Carter. In 1982, near the end of his second term, he ran for the U.S. Senate, against the Republican Pete Wilson, who was then the mayor of San Diego. There was a ballot measure to declare California's opposition to nuclear weapons, and Brown released a commercial in favor of it, featuring a mushroom cloud and a child telling voters, "I want to go on living." A former adviser recalled, "I told Jerry, 'This is stupid!' He was already seen as kooky." Wilson beat Brown handily.

In the years after Brown left the governorship, he travelled to Japan, to study Zen Buddhism, and to India, to work with Mother Teresa in caring for the dying. He campaigned for President again in the 1992 election, declaring his righteous opposition to the "unholy alliance of private greed and corrupt politics." He attacked Bill and Hillary Clinton for conflicts of interest during their time in Arkansas, and said he would not accept contributions of more than a hundred dollars. After losing decisively to Bill Clinton, Brown moved to a converted warehouse building in Oakland, where, for a time, he hosted a radio talk show. In 1998, he ran for mayor of Oakland, on a platform of improving schools, revitalizing the downtown, and reducing the crime rate, and won.

Senator Dianne Feinstein, who has known Brown and his family since the sixties, told me, "He had that awful



"Good luck getting a sandwich at this hour in L.A."

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moniker, Governor Moonbeam, and I think the difference came when he served as mayor of Oakland, because he saw what it took to make a city run." He founded two charter schools, including a military academy, and forged strong relationships with law enforcement. In his Oakland office, he displayed a poster with his father's campaign slogan from a run for San Francisco district attorney, in 1943: "Crack down on crime, pick Brown this time."

During Brown's time in Oakland, he cut ties to a longtime political adviser, Jacques Barzaghi. Bald, dressed in black, and speaking in a semi-comical French accent, Barzaghi was given to preposterous utterances. "We are not disorganized," he said of the highly disorganized 1992 Presidential run. "Our campaign transcends understanding." In 2001, one of Brown's staffers filed a sexual-harassment complaint against Barzaghi; the city paid fifty thousand dollars to settle the complaint. Brown finally fired Barzaghi in 2004, after Barzaghi's wife, his sixth, called the Oakland police, alleging that he had been violent during a domestic dispute. (No charges were filed, and Barzaghi could not be reached for comment.)

Some of Brown's friends believe that his relationship with a business executive named Anne Gust steadied him after the Barzaghi era. They started dating in 1990, and married in 2005, a first marriage for both of them. Feinstein, who performed the civil ceremony, said she had been remonstrating with Brown: "If you don't propose, you're going to grow old and lonely and sick, and Anne is going to find someone else." Gust Brown is twenty years younger than Brown, and until they married she was a senior executive at the Gap. The next year, he ran for state attorney general, and Gust Brown ran his campaign; she has been his de-facto campaign manager and closest adviser ever since.

"While Jerry and I were dating, it was more a normal relationship," Gust Brown told me. "I had my business, he had his business. Obviously, we came together and talked at night, but we weren't like this"—she wrapped two fingers together—"we weren't together all the time." Once they married and began campaigning together, though, they rarely left each other's side. "I don't think there are many marriages like that. I think for most of the relationships I had before, that would have been the death knell—I don't think I could have lasted five days. So I'm sort of surprised by how well it has worked for us, especially given our differences in personality, where I'm more logical, step by step, and he's more creative—but it all flows well."

Some of their friends say that if they had gotten married earlier Brown might have won the Presidency. When I relayed that to Gust Brown, she laughed, acknowledging that her husband has become "more disciplined."

Several people close to Brown told me that, as he watched the 2016 campaign, he came to believe that, although it was unlikely, Trump could win. His sister, Kathleen Brown, a former state treasurer, suggested that Brown and Trump share some stylistic similarities. "Trump is a rule-breaker, and Jerry was the ultimate rule-breaker," she said. "He saw that Trump had an instinct, tapping into that counter-élite current, at the rallies and in the debates. Jerry was *always* counter-élite."

As the primary contest between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders intensified, friends urged Brown to endorse one of the two, but he remained neutral. As many observers noted, Sanders's aggressive, antiestablishment campaign against Clinton was much like Brown's

against her husband, in 1992. Finally, a week before the California primary, Brown released a letter declaring his support for Clinton. It was a studiously tepid endorsement: Brown had decided to vote for Clinton, he wrote, "because I believe this is the only path forward to win the presidency and stop the dangerous candidacy of Donald Trump."

There had been speculation in 2015 that Brown would enter the race, but, Gust Brown told me, "at that point, he had just gotten reëlected, and Hillary had it all sewn up, by everyone's account. Honestly, if people had known—in hindsight, what you would think and do . . ."

On December 14, 2016, Brown gave his first major speech since Trump's election, at the American Geophysical Union conference, in San Francisco. He told an audience of thousands of scientists that California would continue its efforts to thwart climate change, regardless of federal policy and corporate lobbying. "We've got the scientists, we've got the lawyers, and we're ready to fight," he said. Some scientists feared that the new Administration would defund NASA's climate-research satellite missions. Brown seemed unfazed: "If Trump turns off the satellites, California will launch its own damn satellite!"

Brown has become one of the world's most outspoken leaders on climate change, but he always intended to collaborate with the Trump Administration. At his Inauguration, Trump promised that he would fund major infrastructure projects. Brown replied, "And I say, 'Amen to that, man. Amen to that, brother. We're there with you!'" That February, Brown requested a hundred billion dollars in federal infrastructure spending, for projects such as the bullet train and twin tunnels for the Sacramento–San Joaquin River Delta, to bring more water to the Central Valley and Southern California. He also wanted to upgrade Caltrain, a commuter-rail line between San Francisco and Silicon Valley.

The following month, Brown met with Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao and with House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy in Washington. Chao had delayed a nearly six-hundred-and-fifty-million-dollar grant for the Caltrain project, after McCarthy and other California House Republicans asked that it be blocked. After the meeting, Brown acknowledged the anger of Resistance supporters at home, but he kept paddling his canoe, first left, then right. "I know some people feel very strongly, so I don't want to minimize their ardor," he said. "At the same time, we want to work with Mr. Trump. If it isn't a trillion dollars, it's tens of billions that California can get." Two months later, Chao granted the funding.

Meanwhile, members of the California legislature had rushed to the forefront of the Resistance. On Election Night, Kevin de León, the Senate leader, asked Anthony Rendon, the speaker of the Assembly, to join him in writing a statement, which they issued the next morning: "Today, we woke up feeling like strangers in a foreign land, because yesterday Americans expressed their views on a pluralistic and democratic society that are clearly inconsistent with the values of the people of California."

In October, I met with de León at his L.A. district headquarters, near Dodger Stadium. He is fifty-one, though he seems younger, with an excitable manner, jumping up from his seat to punctuate his points and showing me videos of himself in public appearances. De León was quick to note Brown's privileged background, and then recounted that his own mother came to the United States as an undocumented immigrant from Guatemala. (She later obtained a green card.) She had a third-grade education, and worked as a housekeeper when he was growing up. De León has served in the legislature since 2006, and was sworn in as Senate president pro tempore in 2014, the first Latino to hold that title in more than a hundred and thirty years.

De León seems intensely competitive with Brown and has defied him on legislative issues. But he is also eager to project at least an episodic closeness to him. "We have worked together on some historic measures," he said. "We were hand in glove. We were like 'The Odd Couple.'"

Two days after I met with de León, he announced that he was challenging Feinstein for her Senate seat. By the standards of California Democrats, Feinstein, who is eighty-four and has served in the Senate since 1992, has been a mild opponent of the Trump Administration. Last August, she was asked when Republican leaders would break with Trump and urge him to resign or move to impeach him. She said she'd rather not comment, but she went on, "Look, this man is going to be President most



"I found him all balled up in a fetal position, but I thought he looked more interesting this way."

likely for the rest of his term. I just hope he has the ability to learn, and to change. And, if he does, he can be a good President. And that's my hope. I have my own personal feelings about it." There was a collective groan from the audience. "Yeah, I understand how you feel," she replied.

Hours after Feinstein's remarks were reported, de León released a statement: "This President has not shown any capacity to learn and proven he is not fit for office. It is the responsibility of Congress to hold him accountable—especially Democrats—not be complicit in his reckless behavior." When de León announced that he was running against Feinstein, he suggested that she was too collegial with Washington Republicans and out of touch with California Democrats. "The D.C. playbook is obsolete, and it's time that we, the people of California, bring the agenda to Washington—not the other way around," he declared.

De León has insistently portrayed himself as a more pugnacious successor to the likes of Brown and Feinstein. He said that he has always been told to "wait my turn" and "know my place," and that he realizes many powerful people prefer he not run. "They are content with the status quo—that they'll decide for us."

De León is not wrong to emphasize his elders' penchant for straddling the middle. Since his first days as governor, Brown has been known as a leader on the environment, but he also has a long, complicated relationship with California's oil-and-gas industry, which is the third largest in the country. He has insisted that, while the oil industry must be strictly regulated, it should not be treated as a pariah. California's cap-and-trade program, which sets an overall limit on greenhouse-gas emissions and requires businesses to buy allowances for each ton of pollution they produce, was set to expire in 2020. Brown, its progenitor and foremost evangelist, could not contemplate leaving its fate unresolved. Last year, battling to win an extension to 2030, with a two-thirds majority that could help protect it from legal challenges, he navigated between environmental-justice activists, liberal and conservative lawmakers, and oil representatives. Regarding the line he has walked between protecting the environment and dealing with its despoilers, Mary Nichols, the chair of the California Air Resources Board, said, "The left has been very angry, and the oil industry, as usual, ungrateful."

The story began in January, 2015, when, in his State of the State address, Brown declared that California has "the most far-reaching environmental laws of any state, and the most integrated policy to deal with climate change of any political jurisdiction in the Western Hemisphere." Now, he said, it was time to establish new objectives, the most ambitious of which was to reduce petroleum use in cars and trucks by fifty per cent by 2030. "How we achieve these goals and at what pace will take great thought and imagination mixed with pragmatic caution," he added.

De León saw it differently. He had recently become Senate leader, and he was eager to sponsor major climate legislation. The next month, without consulting Brown, he introduced a bill that was composed of Brown's goals. "De León initiated that bill. Not a joint effort, not our bill," Brown told me. About the oil-reduction provision, he said, "I thought it was rather difficult to get it, and it would take more time." When I asked de León about his bill, he replied, "Brown said those things in his State of the State. I thought, Let's do it! No, I didn't ask his permission. I'm the leader of a coequal branch of government."

But Brown's caution turned out to be well founded. Industry representatives lobbied heavily against the oil-reduction provision, making headway with some moderate Democrats, who were concerned about higher fuel costs. In the end, the provision was gutted. At a press conference, Brown was unusually combative toward the oil companies, saying, "Oil has won the skirmish, but they've lost the bigger battle. Because I'm more determined than ever."

The next year, Democrats advanced Senate Bill 32, an ambitious piece of climate legislation, which set a new target for reducing carbon-dioxide emissions: at least forty per cent below 1990 levels by 2030. The bill gave the Air Resources Board new regulatory powers, known as "command-and-control," to meet this target. Brown wanted a bill that extended cap-and-trade, but de León pushed S.B. 32 forward. Only when Brown realized it was likely to pass did he help get votes. Later, he reasoned that, if polluters were faced with a choice between command-and-control regulations and cap-and-trade, they would "come begging for cap-and-trade."

After S.B. 32 became law, Chad Mayes, the Republican minority leader of the Assembly, established a working group to consider supporting a cap-and-trade renewal. Some members of his caucus were opposed to any dealings with Democrats, "but, as a Republican, how can you not deal with Democrats when they outnumber us two to one in the legislature, and in the electorate?," Mayes argued. Over the next year, he got to know Brown better. "I'd find myself going to chat with the Governor for a couple minutes, and spend one to two hours. He liked to discuss theology, and current events," Mayes, an evangelical Christian, recalled. He enjoyed these conversations, adding that Brown sees the world differently than he does, but is "very thoughtful, and often engaging in multidimensional chess."

By the spring of 2017, Brown and his staff, led by Nancy McFadden, his executive secretary, were working hard to gain support for cap-and-trade renewal across a large network of stakeholders. As he had predicted, the oil industry was now generally in favor of renewal, but it was driving a hard bargain for its support. He was also at risk of losing environmental-justice groups, which are generally critical of cap-and-trade. They believed that legislators should focus on improving air quality in Southern California's poorest, most polluted neighborhoods. In order to win their support, Brown backed a companion bill on air quality—but he negotiated its provisions with other groups, including the oil companies. Brown asked, "Should I just have said, No, I'm pure, we're not going to have a bill? That is the choice. There is no third. *Tertium non datur*—'A third way is not given.'"

Mayes had been working for months on the deal he wanted from Brown. Finally, twelve of his caucus members confirmed that they would vote for the legislation. Some Republicans were more aligned with Brown than the

environmental-justice Democrats were, an adviser to Mayes said: "Truthfully, a lot of the Democrats have been very frustrated with his brand of fiscal prudence—because they want to be the progressive left and he's trying to shoot the middle."

Four days before the vote, Brown spoke at a hearing on the proposed legislation. He reminded lawmakers that the alternative to cap-and-trade, command-and-control, would lead to far more regulation. "That is not the way to go!" he said. "The way to go is the most efficient, elegant program in the whole world." Climate change, he warned, "is a threat to organized human existence," which would bring "mass migrations, vector diseases, forest fires, Southern California burning up." This was the most important vote of their lives, he told them; he also made it clear he was willing to negotiate further.

The right was lambasting Mayes's caucus for working with the Democrats. So, too, were California's congressional Republicans, led by Kevin McCarthy. By July 17th, the day of the vote, only eight Republicans, including Mayes, supported the bill. Still, despite fierce opposition from the far left and the far right, Brown was able to win a two-thirds majority.

The signing ceremony was held on Treasure Island, with the San Francisco Bay in the background. Brown said that the signing had happened thanks to some "miracles," and the efforts of many people—among them industry representatives. "And they're here. Should we mention them? People representing oil, agriculture, Chamber of Commerce, food processing, Foster Farms, Gallo Winery—the whole crowd!" He continued, "Now, some people say, 'Oh, my God, we don't like these people!' Well, let's face it, this *is* California. Our industry, our wealth, our whole well-being, is the product of all these different individuals and companies," along with, he added, "cultural organizations and nonprofits. The whole thing."

Brown was particularly pleased that he had won a bipartisan vote, an implicit rebuke to Trump, although Brown avoided mention of him. "Now, all you young people, I know how you feel—I used to be young," he said. "I didn't give a damn about experience. When I decided to run for governor, my father said, 'You can't do that. Run for attorney general first.' I said, 'No way! I'm going for the top job—now!'" Brown paused, and smiled. "Now, a little later in life, like forty-two years later, I can tell you experience is good. You know stuff."



Growing polarization, Brown fears, will lead to "an ungovernable America."

Brown was managing the cap-and-trade extension up to the moment of the vote, because he did not trust any legislator to carry it out. His position on the "sanctuary-state" bill was different. From the start, he kept his distance, and those who knew him well said that, unless he got the changes he wanted, he would not sign it.

California has more than 2.3 million undocumented immigrants, the largest such population of any state. Many of its cities have declared that they are sanctuaries, but the word's meaning varies, from a mainly symbolic expression of support for the undocumented to the implementation of more concrete measures. In December, 2016, de León introduced Senate Bill 54, which would set comprehensive limits on state and local officials' coöperation with federal authorities, and possibly hinder the mass deportations that Trump had planned. He promised the undocumented that the state would be their "wall of justice."

When I met with de León, he said that he began thinking about protecting undocumented families on Election Night, when he was on the phone with Brown. California had voted overwhelmingly for Hillary Clinton. "Because Trump takes personally any slight, and this was the mother of all rejections, the Governor and I instinctively felt this President would come after us," de León said.

Four days after Trump's Inauguration, Brown delivered his State of the State address. He did not refer to the "sanctuary-state" bill, but he plainly had the issue in mind. "Under the Constitution, federal law is supreme, and Washington determines immigration policy," he said, but he also asserted that the state had a role to play. He pointed to laws he had signed in the past several years, giving undocumented immigrants basic employment rights, access to higher education, and the ability to obtain driver's licenses. "We

may be called upon to defend those laws, and defend them we will. And let me be clear: we will defend *every-body*—every man, woman, and child—who has come here for a better life and has contributed to the well-being of our state."

For Brown, the last phrase was key. He does not believe that the undocumented should receive the state's protection if they have committed "serious" crimes, he told me. Brown confronted this issue in S.B. 54's predecessor, the Trust Act, which prohibited state and local law enforcement from holding people for longer than forty-eight hours at ICE's request, with exceptions for some offenses. In 2012, the legislature passed the Trust Act, but Brown vetoed it. He had worked to secure a strong relationship with law enforcement, and county sheriffs argued that if their coöperation with federal authorities was restricted they would be unable to keep dangerous criminals off the streets. The next year, Brown signed the bill after the list of offenses for which people could be held was expanded to include about eight hundred crimes.

In the first half of 2017, several amendments were added to the "sanctuary-state" bill, which helped it to gain some support from law enforcement. But, on "Meet the Press" in early August, Brown said that he wanted more changes. While he wanted to be "very understanding" of the plight of the undocumented, he said, "I take a more nuanced and careful approach. Because you do have people who are not here legally, they've committed crimes. They have no business in the United States in the manner in which they've come and conducted themselves subsequently." In late August, Brown's staff presented de León with a list of amendments.

GIRAFFE

In another life, he was Caesar's pet, perhaps a gift from Cleopatra
When she returned to Rome   Her hair salty and sapphired
From bathing, the winged kohl around her eyes smudged
        From heat.   In another life, he was from Somalia
        Where he spent hours watching clouds
In shapes of feral acrobats tipping along their tightropes
Spun of camels' hair and jute.
        His eyes were liquid, kind.
        His lashes each as long as a hummingbird's tongue.
His fetlocks puffed from galloping, his tail curled upward
From the joy of feeling fleet across the tinted grasslands
        And the gold savannahs there.
                Do you find me colorful as well?
Once, in another life in the Serengeti, he stretched his neck
To feed on the acacia twigs, mimosa, wild apricot.
        He was gentle and his heart was as long
        As a human's arm.
At night, the others of his species hummed to each other across
The woodlands there; no one knows how, exactly, to this day,
But you can hear their fluted sounds.
                Pliny the Elder wrote that,
In the circus of the hunting-theatres of ancient Greece,
        He would be safe.
        He was considered among the curiosities.
The House of the Medici found him novel,
And he pleased them mightily.
                Do you find my story pleasing, too?
Even on the ship to France,
                The sailors cut an oblong hole
Through the deck above the cargo hold to allow his head
        To poke safely through.
        When he arrived they dressed him in royal livery
To walk the seven hundred leggy kilometres
        From Marseilles to Paris to be presented
To the Queen   Who fed him rose petals from her hand.
At Thebes, in the tomb of the Valley of the Kings,
He was depicted in a hieroglyph, his forelegs gently tethered
By two slaves with a green monkey clinging to his neck like a child
Just along for the ride.
                Do you think I have imagined this?
In a woodblock, once   In an early-Netherlandish world,

Day after day, scores of activists demonstrated outside Brown's office. On August 23rd, PICO California, the largest community-organizing network in the state, brought about five hundred clergy, immigrants, and grassroots leaders to a "people's hearing" in the Capitol Building. The day before the event, Joseph McKellar, a co-director of PICO California, learned that the Governor was willing to meet with him about the bill. Brown and McKellar knew each other slightly. PICO had been founded by Father John Baumann, who had been in the Jesuit seminary with Brown, and Brown had called McKellar to get his support for cap-and-trade.

McKellar brought several undocumented immigrants, immigration attorneys, and a priest to the meeting. The group entered Brown's outer office, which resembles a large dining room, with a wooden farmhouse table and long benches. There was an icon of St. Ignatius hanging on the wall. Brown emerged from his interior office and asked for their perspective. "We fully expected him to try to control the meeting," McKellar recalled, "but he turned it over to us."

One of the women in the group described dropping off her two young daughters at a relative's house in Mendota, a small town in the Central Valley, and heading to church, when two police officers stopped her because, they said, her car's tinted windows were

He is shown with a crocodile, a unicorn, and a wobbly man
With a tail and prehensile feet.
Once, in Khartoum,
He bent his neck low enough to take milk from a pewter bowl
Held by a Sudanese farmer's son. Centuries later,
In Piccadilly Circus, he was excluded from the Carrousel;
Everyone favored him, but no one could climb that high.
If you come back from the other world, to this—
The sky in Denmark, in its reticulated weathers, is inky
On most days in February now.
In the Copenhagen Zoo they only name the animals who grow
Old there, and, in this life, they called him
Marius but he was just a two-year-old.
In that moment was he looking at a gray, cobbled
Steeple in the middle distance of a dome
Or thinking of a time when his life was circled by a mane
Of warmth in a bright Numidian sun? His belly was full
And his eyes closed slightly His lashes casting long
Pink shadows on his face.
Do you think I made this up?
The attending veterinarian, Mads Bertelsen, shot him only once.
He needed badly to be culled—his genetic type and character
Replicated quite tidily enough already there, said Bengt Holst,
Director of the Zoo. On that same day,
After mid-noon tea and biscuits at their schools,
The Danish children were ushered to the habitat in the Gardens,
So they could learn firsthand About anatomy.
The keepers cut him open to reveal his neck, his tongue, his heart
(Which weighed just shy of twenty pounds).
The children, wound in down, bound in bright wool scarves
Which covered their open mouths with horizontal stripes,
Were mittened, wide-eyed, curious.
Do you find me curious as well?
When the Nordic dark settled in, so early,
The children, blanketed in white, began to fuss at sleep, and cry.
It would not snow that night.
What is it in me Makes me tell you of these sights.

—*Lucie Brock-Broido*
(1956-2018)

too dark. After inspecting her driver's license and making a call, they asked whether she knew she had a deportation order against her. Yes, she said, but the court hearing had been scheduled in Texas, and she had been unable to travel there. They released her, but told her that ICE officers would be coming to her house. For the past four months, she had not been home; she was afraid to go to her daughters' school. "It took her a while to get through her story, because it was so traumatic, and she was crying, but the Governor never interrupted," McKellar said. "He was very respectful. He listened intently—there was almost a pastoral quality to it."

Ultimately, the bill's protections were dramatically reduced. Brown rejected a version that removed a number of crimes from the Trust Act's list. And he insisted that sheriffs maintain the ability to grant ICE access to jails to interview immigrants. When Brown signed the legislation, on October 5th, he issued a statement that began, "This bill states that local authorities will not ask about immigration status during routine interactions." After citing several more actions that S.B. 54 prohibited, Brown continued, "It is important to note what the bill does not do. This bill does not prevent or prohibit Immigration and Customs Enforcement or the Department of Homeland Security from doing their own work in any way."

When, in March, Jeff Sessions claimed that the legislation was obstructing federal law enforcement, Brown objected, pointing to his signing statement. The final legislation was "written carefully to recognize the supremacy of federal law," he told me. "I doubt whether the federal government really has a problem." Brown was walking his habitual centrist line. He wanted to make "a serious effort to give a sense of security and relieve the fear and anxiety that's out there among undocumented people." But, from the start, he had no interest in defying the federal government.

Brown's return to the governorship gave him an opportunity few politicians have: to watch one of his most unfortunate decisions play out over decades and then try to repair some of the damage it caused. Like many officials of both parties, Brown had signed legislation that contributed to the rise in severe criminal sentences. Robert Hertzberg, a longtime legislator, told me, "Jerry has said, 'I'm trying to fix what I screwed up.'" Still, for Brown, it has hardly been a simple undoing.

In 1976, Brown had signed a "determinate" sentencing law, which reduced the authority of parole boards to decide when an inmate could be released, and prescribed fixed terms for most crimes. Authority shifted, in effect, from parole boards to the legislature and prosecutors. In the eighties and nineties, the legislature enacted nearly a hundred new crime laws, and prosecutors advocated for ballot initiatives that added time to prison sentences. Many states passed three-strikes laws, but California's, passed as a ballot initiative in 1994, was unusually harsh: even if the third strike was a minor crime, it could result in a life sentence. Brown told me, "It's been one



“Well, what do we have here? Some sort of subterranean rail carriage designed to transport commuters throughout the greater metropolitan area?”

• •

escalation after another—hundreds of new crimes, hundreds of enhancements. I never imagined we were going to build twenty-three new prisons.” When he left the governorship, in 1983, there were thirty-four thousand state prisoners. At its peak, in 2006, the prison population was more than a hundred and seventy-five thousand.

In 2004, Proposition 66 sought to modify California’s three-strikes law so that a life sentence could be imposed only when all three felony convictions were for “serious or violent” crimes. Despite the fact that Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger opposed the initiative, polls showed that, two weeks before the vote, nearly two-thirds of likely voters supported it. Then, former governor Pete Wilson told me, with twelve days left, he got an agreement from Henry Nicholas, an Orange County billionaire and victims’-rights activist, to donate $1.5 million to help defeat the initiative. (Nicholas eventually donated $3.5 million.) At that point, Schwarzenegger intensified his opposition and released TV ads condemning it. Former governor Grey Davis, a Democrat, also joined the effort.

Wilson told me that he thought having four governors oppose the initiative would make an even stronger statement. That Brown might join them “did seem out of character,” Wilson acknowledged, but nonetheless he called him. “And I know that Jerry spent some time with Henry Nicholas, and a friendship was cultivated.” Brown joined the “No on 66” team, and the measure was defeated, fifty-three per cent to forty-seven per cent. By that time, people in political circles knew that Brown was interested in running for California attorney general in 2006.

When Brown began his third term as governor, in 2011, he was faced with federal litigation over the prison system, which, since the nineties, had suffered from overcrowding and substandard health care. In 2009, a three-judge panel had ordered the state to vastly reduce prison overcrowding. Brown came up with a dramatic policy known as realignment, which sent lower-level felons to local jails or released them, under the supervision of county probation officers. Brown suffered no significant political repercussions. Since realignment, the state prison population has declined by more than twenty per cent. Recidivism remains about the same, and the crime rate has fluctuated within a narrow range.

Still, Brown continued to move cautiously on criminal-justice reform, even when an issue mattered deeply to him. He is a long-standing opponent of capital punishment. In 2012, Proposition 34 offered the chance to abolish the death penalty in the state, shifting more than seven hundred and twenty-five death-row inmates to a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole. Brown expressed neither opposition nor support. On Election Day, a reporter asked how he’d voted on the initiative. “I voted to abolish the death penalty,” Brown said. The measure was defeated, fifty-two per cent to forty-eight per cent. If Brown had supported it before the ballot, the campaign’s leaders thought, they might have won. (Brown strongly disputed the idea that his endorsement would have changed the outcome.)

While Brown was choosing to remain neutral on Proposition 34, he was also deciding whether or not to sign a controversial juvenile-justice bill, Senate Bill 9, the Fair Sentencing for Youth Act. It was not as inflammatory as the death-penalty initiative, but it could still have created a political backlash. S.B. 9 would allow some inmates, sentenced to life without parole when they were younger than eighteen, to have a chance to earn parole after they had served at least ten years in prison. Many were convicted of murder, and some crimes were particularly heinous.

The U.S. congressman Juan Vargas, a Democrat, who was then a state senator, recalled going to see Brown about S.B. 9. After two years of struggle, Vargas had got the votes for the bill, and he wanted to know if Brown would sign it. Like Brown, Vargas is a former Jesuit. He once spent the night at the seminary where Brown had been a novice, and when Vargas came out of his cell at dawn an old priest across the hall said that he had slept in Jerry Brown’s cell. The first time Vargas met Brown, he told him he’d stayed in his cell. “*Really*?” Brown had responded. “How did you know? Is there a little plaque there?” Now, in Brown’s office, Vargas noticed that “The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius” was on Brown’s desk. As they discussed S.B. 9, he tried to remind Brown of his Jesuit

roots: " 'What is it that is going to allow you to do the most good?' I was sure it was baked into him." Vargas said, "I think he really did start to soften up, and he said, 'I'm not saying no, but we've got to talk about these other things, and the bill isn't on my desk yet. Let's keep talking.'"

Brown was backing a workers'-compensation bill, which needed significant changes if it was to pass. Vargas had carried a major bill on workers' compensation two years earlier, and Brown wanted his help, but Vargas knew how contentious such legislation was, and he begged off. Brown said to a member of his staff, "Don't worry, Vargas will come to us." And, eventually, he did. "He had a whole bunch of things, and he knew what I wanted, and he became a really crafty politician," Vargas said. "It was a comprehensive settling of all debts."

Vargas went on, "And at one moment I said, 'Governor, how can we do all these other things that you want done, and not this one?' And he said, 'I don't want you to go telling people right now, but I'll sign it. Don't worry about it—I give you my word.' " Two days before the end of the legislative session, an advocate for S.B. 9 told the press that the Governor's staff had mentioned "concerns," such as "He'll end up being known as the guy who lets lots of criminals out of prison." But, on the last day, Brown signed the bill.

In his fourth term, Brown began signing more criminal-justice-reform bills. "He was freer," one advocate said. "He didn't have to worry about reëlection anymore." He has vetoed bills that include sentence enhancements and signed many juvenile-justice bills. He also fought for a ballot initiative that made more inmates convicted of nonviolent offenses eligible for early release through parole. In campaigning for the initiative, Brown emphasized that it was a response to another order to reduce prison overcrowding in California—this one from the U.S. Supreme Court, in 2011—but he also argued, "Why not give some of these people a second chance? Aren't redemption and forgiveness what it's all about?" In his past two terms, Brown has issued one thousand and fifty-nine pardons and thirty-seven commutations, far more than any of his recent predecessors did.

Vargas said that he sometimes still texts Brown on criminal-justice matters; Brown will typically text back in Latin. "He's been great on everything. I think he's much more open, in this last term. I almost think he's being led a little more by Pope Francis. The Pope, of course, is out there on issues of immigration, justice, the environment—and it seems like Jerry is right there with him."

For the past few years, Brown has been going to dinners to celebrate the Feast of St. Ignatius. Last July, Father Michael Czerny, an Under-Secretary for Refugees and Migrants at the Vatican, travelled to California from Rome to attend the dinner, delivering a sermon beforehand. "I think the Pope is looking for messengers who are going to take up the mantle of his world view and his values and support them," McKellar said. "And they probably see Jerry Brown as one of the few examples in the United States of someone who, at least when it comes to climate justice, is fighting the good fight."

Although Brown will be eighty-two in 2020, his name has occasionally appeared on lists of possible Democratic Presidential candidates. He tends to brush the suggestion aside, and talks instead about moving to a ranch he owns in Colusa County, outside Sacramento. The property once belonged to his great-grandfather August Schuckman, who came from Germany on a ship called Perseverance, as Brown likes to mention, and travelled to California by covered wagon after the gold rush. In Brown's office, he has a black-and-white photograph of Schuckman with a long white beard, slightly bent, feeding his sheep. Brown has told Gust Brown, "I want a picture of me, doing that."



A few years ago, the Browns built a redwood cabin on the ranch, with no running water and an outhouse nearby. They often spend weekends there. They are currently building a solar-powered, one-bedroom house, complete with an indoor bathroom. "This is luxury!" Brown says. They aim to have the house ready when his term ends, in January, 2019. When I asked Gust Brown whether they might launch another campaign instead, she said, "Who knows? I've learned to just take life as it comes, right?" She added that she thought Brown would be "an extraordinary President."

If, as now seems possible, Democrats dominate the 2018 and 2020 elections, and they end up governing as unilaterally as the Republicans have, Brown fears that "a cycle will be created, in which one side pushes as far as it can until it's thrown out, then the next one does it, and then it will happen again." He compared it to a car "fishtailing": "I was driving on the freeway, I don't know how fast, and I almost missed the exit, and made a hard right onto the ramp. Luckily, I got control back. But it's that kind of perturbation of a system. So," he resumed, "the Democrats get more extreme, the Republicans get more extreme, and you have an ungovernable America. And a stop-start, not-reliable superpower. Other people will have to react to that level of uncertainty, and that will not be positive for America's role in the world.

"Therefore, it's *very important* to take prudential steps to keep a stable society. I've always thought that's important—to keep balance. Don't push things too far, because it will unnerve people."

During the past year, Brown has been reading about the Weimar Republic. He noted certain similarities between Germany in the thirties and the United States today—in particular, "the erosion of familiar cultural foundations. The world is changing quite a lot, and that can undermine people's sense of confidence." He was reflecting on this last fall, when he spoke at several climate conferences in Europe. The Weimar period "was quite a wild time in Germany—very expressive, very artistic—but it all turned out bad," he told me. "When I was over in Baden-Württemberg, I gave my speech, and after I finished a young man and a young woman got up and they played a beautiful flute song, highly civilized. But they were very civilized before. I'm trying to say, things change. Stuff happens. Somehow, I don't feel confident that, just because it looks good, it can't get worse." ♦

PORTFOLIO

GUN COUNTRY

A new generation of American kids embraces firearms.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHARIF HAMZA

All but one were born in the decade after Columbine; like the student gun-control advocates activated by the recent massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, in Parkland, Florida, most are in their teens. But the children depicted here—hunters, target shooters, competitors in trap and skeet—occupy a parallel realm, where guns signify not danger, alienation, and the threat of death but safety, discipline, and trust.

Several years ago, while on a road trip, Sharif Hamza, a British-born photographer who lives with his wife and two daughters in Brooklyn, met a grade-school kid with a shotgun in the Arizona desert. Watching the boy's father patiently instruct him in safety procedures, Hamza was struck by how different the interaction was from the culture he grew up in, where soccer was the game in the park and the rich kids might golf or ski, but shooting was practically unheard-of.

Curious, Hamza reached out to 4-H clubs—which teach riflery along with animal husbandry—and began to attend youth competitions associated with the National Shooting Sports Foundation, a trade group that also puts on one of the largest gun shows in the world. Outside of cities and their suburbs, Hamza says, "shooting felt as common as skateboarding."

This is not an accident. With gun-advocacy groups investing heavily in youth recruitment and manufacturers catering to an emerging children's market, the shooting sports are gaining in popularity. (Before Nikolas Cruz was expelled from Stoneman Douglas, he was a member of a varsity riflery team that benefitted from a ten-thousand-dollar grant from the National Rifle Association.) Shooting generally places few physical demands; advocates present it as a safe sport, with little incidence of injury (unlike soccer, or, for that matter, skiing). With no discernible disparity between the sexes, it is also portrayed as an empowering one. Millennials' attitudes about guns cut along seemingly opposing lines: most support fewer restrictions on which weapons can be bought but tighter regulations on who can buy them.

When Hamza began his project, in 2016, the families of his subjects were wary, lest their children be drawn into a heated political debate. In recent weeks, that concern has grown more urgent; after Parkland, any image of a child with an AR-15 must carry an acute emotional charge. Hamza, an urbanite, reassured the parents that, for him, guns were a way to learn about an unexplored facet of American youth culture. When the kids he met weren't shooting, they hung out with their parents, who, because of the risks and their own interest, tend to be ever-present. Around weapons, Hamza's subjects were solemn and alert: no unseemly exhibitionism or goofing with their guns. "It's drilled into the kids' heads—respect and responsibility," Hamza says.

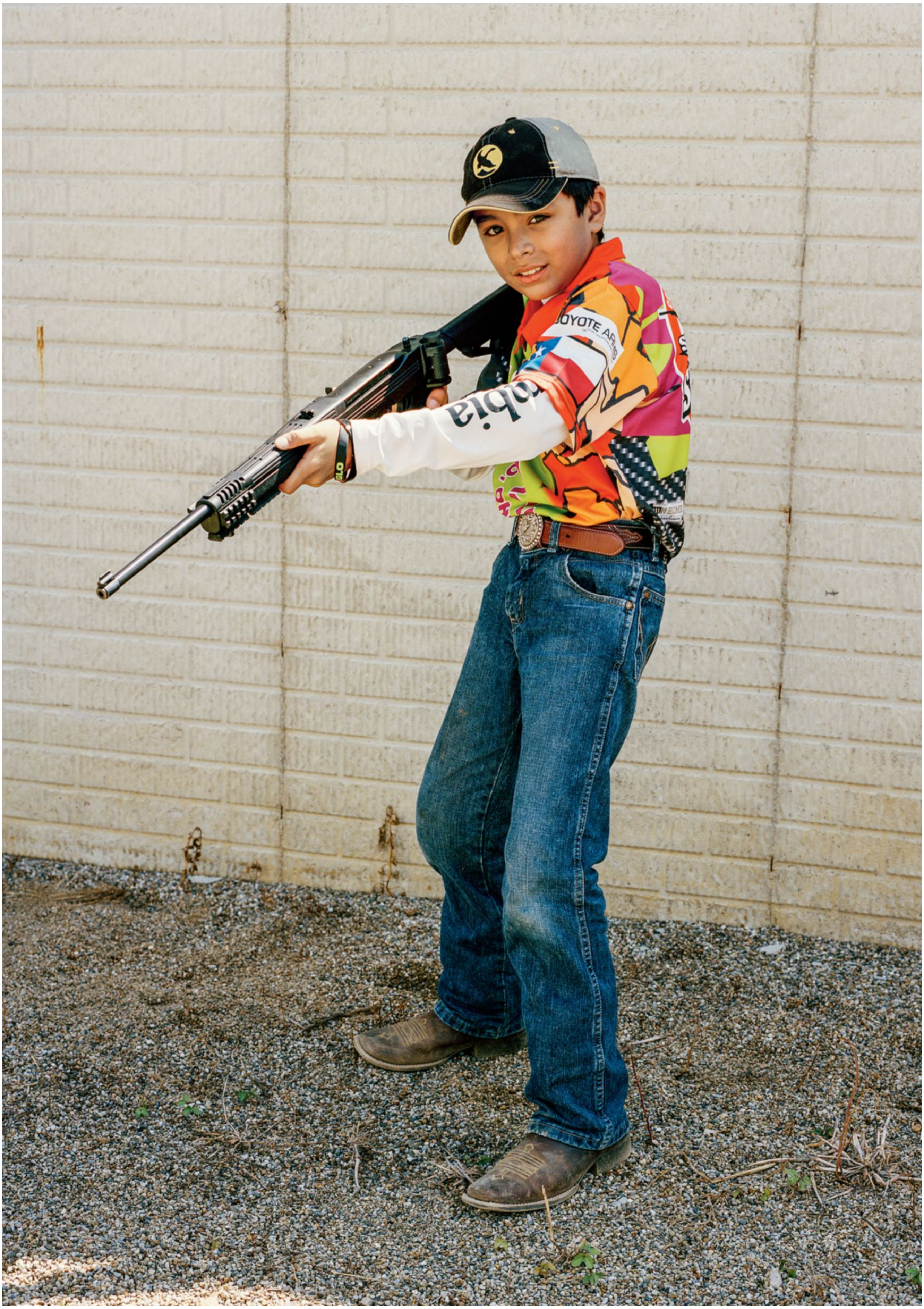
As firearms have proliferated in the United States, so have gun-related injuries and deaths. For Hamza's subjects, though, guns are a given (often literally so, as gifts from Mom or Dad). They respond to the danger inherent in weapons—and the danger in the world, however remote, which often drives their acquisition—with determination to attain mastery.

At a shooting meet in Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri, Hamza met Cheyenne Dalton, a two-time ladies' world champion in an event that involves a pistol and a rifle. That day, Cheyenne, who is seventeen and has an ammunition sponsor, was competing in 3-Gun, which meant running through an obstacle course firing a handgun, a shotgun, and an AR-15 at specified intervals. Cheyenne, who also plays the mandolin in a bluegrass band that she founded, was recruited by a professional trainer at a concealed-carry course taken by her mother, who wanted to protect herself from crime. Now, at gun shows, Cheyenne finds herself encouraging other women and youths to try shooting, and she hopes one day to work in the firearms industry. To her, there is no contradiction between being a safety freak and loving AR-15s. "The thing about shooting is it's just so fun," she told me. "It's really great for families."

—*Dana Goodyear*

Nicole Van Blarcom, from Stewartsville, New Jersey, photographed at age fourteen.







Left: Joaquin Elizondo, from Edinburg, Texas, at age nine.
Above: Cheyenne Dalton, from Lockwood, Missouri, at age sixteen.



Shannara McDunn, from Helena, Montana, at age seventeen.



Matt Kirby, from Billings, Montana, at age eleven; Lane Bequette, from Laurel, Montana, at age eleven; and Nathan Dierenfield, from Billings, Montana, at age twelve.



Above: Dorian, from Montana, at age fifteen.
Right: Jordan Walton, from Grafton, Wisconsin, at age thirteen.


SCHOLASTIC
SHOOTING SPORTS





Left: Saige Jessie Bruzaud-Holstein, from Montague, New Jersey, at age fourteen.
Above: Tyler Pegues, from Memphis, Tennessee, at age fourteen.



 ILLUSTRATION BY HENNING WAGENBRETH

Before you were born, you were a head and a tail in a milky pool—a swimmer. You were a race, a dying off, a breaking through, an arrival. Before you were born, you were an egg in your mom, who was an egg in her mom. Before you were born, you were a nested Russian doll of possibility in your mom's ovaries. You were two halves of a million different possibilities, a billion heads or tails, flip-shine on spun coin. Before you were born, you were the idea to make it to California for gold or bust. You were white, you were brown, you were red, you were dust. You were hiding, you were seeking. Before you were born, you were chased, beaten, broken, trapped in Oklahoma. Before you were born, you were an idea your mom got into her head in the seventies, to hitchhike across the country and become a dancer in New York. You were on your way when she did not make it across the country but sputtered and spiralled and landed in Taos, New Mexico, at a peyote commune called Morning Star. Before you were born, you were your dad's decision to move away from Oklahoma, to northern New Mexico to learn about a Pueblo guy's fireplace. You were the light in the wet of your parents' eyes as they met across that fireplace in ceremony. Before you were born, your halves inside them moved to Oakland. Before you were born, before your body was much more than heart, spine, bone, skin, blood, and vein, when you'd just started to build muscle, before you showed, bulged in her belly, as her belly, before your dad's pride could belly-swell at the sight of you, your parents were in a room listening to the sound your heart made. You had an arrhythmic heartbeat. The doctor said it was normal. Your arrhythmic heart was not abnormal.

"Maybe he's a drummer," your dad said.

"He doesn't even know what a drum is," your mom said. "And the man said arrhythmic. That means no rhythm."

"Maybe it just means he knows the rhythm so good he doesn't always hit it when you expect him to."

"Rhythm of what?" she said.

But, once you got big enough to make your mom feel you, she couldn't deny it. You swam to the beat. When your dad brought out the kettledrum, you'd kick her in time with it, or in time with her heartbeat, or with one of the oldies mixtapes she'd made from records she loved and played endlessly in your Aerostar minivan. Once you were out in the world, running and jumping and climbing, you tapped your toes and fingers everywhere, all the time. On tabletops, desktops. You tapped every surface you found in front of you, listened for the sound things made back at you when you hit them. The timbre of taps, the din of dings, silverware clangs in kitchens, door knocks, knuckle cracks, head scratches. You were finding out that everything made a sound. Everything could be drumming, whether the rhythm was kept or it strayed. Even gunshots and backfire, the howl of trains at night, the wind against your windows. The world was made of sound.

But inside every kind of sound lurked a sadness. In the quiet between your parents after a fight they'd both managed to lose. Or when you and your sisters listened through the walls for the early signs of a fight about to start. For the late signs of a fight reignited. The sound of the church service, the building wail of worship, your mom speaking in tongues on the crest of that weekly Sunday wave. Sadness because you couldn't feel any of it, though you wanted to. You felt that you needed it, that it could protect you from the dreams you had almost every night about the end of the world and the possibility of hell forever—you living there, still a boy, unable to leave or die or do anything but burn in a lake of fire. Sadness came in the sound of your dad snoring in church, even as members of the congregation, members of your family, were being slain by the Holy Ghost in the aisle right next to him. Sadness came in the quiet of the street when the days got shorter at the end of summer and the kids weren't out anymore. In the color of that fleeting sky, sadness lurked. Sadness pounced, slid into everything it could find its way into, through anything, through sound, through you.

You didn't think of any of the tapping or the knocking as drumming until you actually started drumming, many years later. It would have been good to know that you'd always done something naturally. But there was too much going on with everyone else in your family for anyone to notice that you should probably have done something else with your fingers and toes than tap, with your mind and time than knock at all the surfaces in your life like you were looking for a way in.

You're headed to a powwow. You were invited to drum at the Big Oakland Powwow even though you quit drum group. You weren't gonna go. You haven't wanted to see anyone from work since you got fired. Especially anyone from the powwow committee. But there's never been anything like it for you—the way that big drum fills your body until there's only the drum, the sound, the song.

The name of your drum group is Southern Moon. You joined a year after you started working at the Indian Center as a janitor. You're supposed to say custodian now, or maintenance person, but you've always thought of yourself as a janitor. When you were sixteen, you went on a trip to Washington, D.C., to visit your uncle—your mom's brother. He took you to the Smithsonian American Art Museum, where you discovered James Hampton. He was an artist, a Christian, a mystic, a janitor. James Hampton ended up meaning everything to you. Anyway, being a janitor was just a job. It paid the rent, and you could have your earphones in all day. No one wants to talk to the guy cleaning up. The earphones are an additional service. People don't have to pretend to be interested in you because they feel bad that you're taking their trash out from under their desk and giving them a fresh bag.

Drum group was Tuesday nights. All were welcome. Not women, though. They had their own drum group, Thursday nights. They were Northern Moon. You first heard the big drum by accident one night after work. You'd come back because you'd forgotten your earphones. You were just about to get on the bus when you realized they weren't in your ears when you most wanted them, for that long ride home. The drum group played on the first floor. You walked into the room and, just as you did, they started singing. High-voiced wailing and howled harmonies

that screamed through the boom of that big drum. Old songs that sang to the old sadness you always kept as close as skin, without meaning to. The word "triumph" flashed in your head then. What was it doing there? You never used that word. But that was what it sounded like to make it through these hundreds of American years, to sing through them. That was the sound of pain forgetting itself in song. You went back every Tuesday for the next year.

Keeping time wasn't hard for you. The hard part was singing. You'd never been a talker. You'd certainly never sung before. Not even alone. But Bobby made you do it. Bobby was big, maybe six-four, three-fifty. He said that it was because he came from eight different tribes. He had to fit all of them in there, he said, pointing at his belly. He had the best voice in the group, hands down. He could go high or low. And he was the one who invited you in. If it were up to Bobby, the drum group would be bigger, would include everyone. He'd have the whole world on a drum if he could. Bobby Big Medicine—sometimes a name fit just right. Your voice is low, like your dad's.

"You can't even hear it when I sing," you told Bobby after group one day.

"So what? Adds body. Bass harmony is underappreciated," Bobby told you, then handed you a cup of coffee.

"The big drum's all you need for bass," you said.

"Voice bass is different from drum bass," Bobby said. "Drum bass is closed. Voice bass opens."

"I don't know," you said.

"Voice can take a long time to come all the way out, brother," Bobby said. "Be patient."

You walk outside your studio apartment to a hot Oakland summer day, an Oakland you remember as gray, always gray. Oakland summer days from your childhood. Mornings so gray they filled the whole day with gloom and cool, even after the blue broke through. This heat's too much. You sweat easily. Sweat from walking. Sweat at the thought of sweating. Sweat through clothes to where it shows. You take off your hat and squint up at the sun. At this point, you should probably accept the reality of global warming, of climate change. The ozone thinning again, like they said it was in the nineties, when your sisters used to bomb their hair with Aqua Net and you'd gag and spit in the sink extra loud to let them know you hated it and to remind them about the ozone, how hair spray was the reason the world might burn like it said in Revelation, the next end, the second end after the flood, a flood of fire from the sky this time, maybe from the lack of ozone protection, maybe because of their abuse of Aqua Net—and why did they need their hair three inches in the air, curled over like a breaking wave? Because what? You never knew. Except that all the other girls did it, too. And haven't you also heard or read that the world tilts on its axis ever so slightly every year so that the angle makes the earth like a piece of metal when the sun hits it just right and it becomes just as bright as the sun itself? Haven't you heard that it's getting hotter because of this tilt, this ever-increasing tilt of the earth, which was inevitable and not humanity's fault, not our cars or our emissions or Aqua Net but plain and simple entropy—or was it atrophy, or was it apathy?

You're near downtown, headed for the 19th Street BART station. You walk with a slightly dropped, sunken right shoulder. Just like your dad. The limp, too, right side. You know that this limp could be mistaken for some kind of affect, some lame attempt at gangsta lean, but on some level that you maybe don't even acknowledge you know that walking like you do subverts the straight-postured upright citizenly way of moving one's arms and feet just so, to express obedience, to pledge allegiance to a way of life and to a nation and its laws. Left, right, left, and so on. But have you really cultivated this drop-shouldered walk, this lean to the right, in opposition? Is it really some Native-specific countercultural thing you're going for? Some vaguely anti-American movement? Or do you walk the way your dad walked simply because genes and pain and styles of walking and talking get passed down without anyone even trying? The limp is something you've cultivated to look more like a statement of your individual style and less like an old basketball injury. To get injured and not recover is a sign of weakness. Your limp is practiced. An articulate limp, which says something about the way you've learned to roll with the punches, all the times you've been fucked over, knocked down, what you've recovered from or haven't, what you've walked or limped away from, with or without style—that's on you.

You pass a coffee shop you hate because it's always hot and flies constantly swarm the front of the shop, where a big patch of sunlight seethes with some invisible shit the flies love and where there's always just that one seat left, in the heat with the flies, which is why you hate it, on top of the fact that the place doesn't open until ten in the morning and closes at six in the evening, to cater to all the hipsters and artists who hover and buzz around Oakland like flies themselves, America's white suburban vanilla youth, searching for some invisible thing Oakland can give them, street cred or inner-city inspiration.

Before getting to the 19th Street station, you pass a group of white teenagers who size you up. You're almost afraid of them. Not because you think they'll do anything. It's how out of place they are, all the while looking like they own the city. You want to run them down. Scream something at them. Scare them back to wherever they came from. Scare them out of Oakland. Scare the Oakland they've made their own out of them. You could do it, too. You're one of these big, lumbering Indians. Six feet, two-thirty, chip on your shoulder so heavy it makes you lean, makes everyone see you, your weight, what you carry.

Your dad is one thousand per cent Indian. An overachiever. A recovering alcoholic medicine man from Oklahoma, for whom English is his second language. He loves to gamble and smokes American Spirit cigarettes. He has false teeth and prays for twenty minutes before every meal, asks for help from the Creator for everyone, beginning with the orphan children and ending with the servicemen and servicewomen out there, your one-thousand-per-cent-Indian dad, who cries only in ceremony and has bad knees, which took a turn for the worse

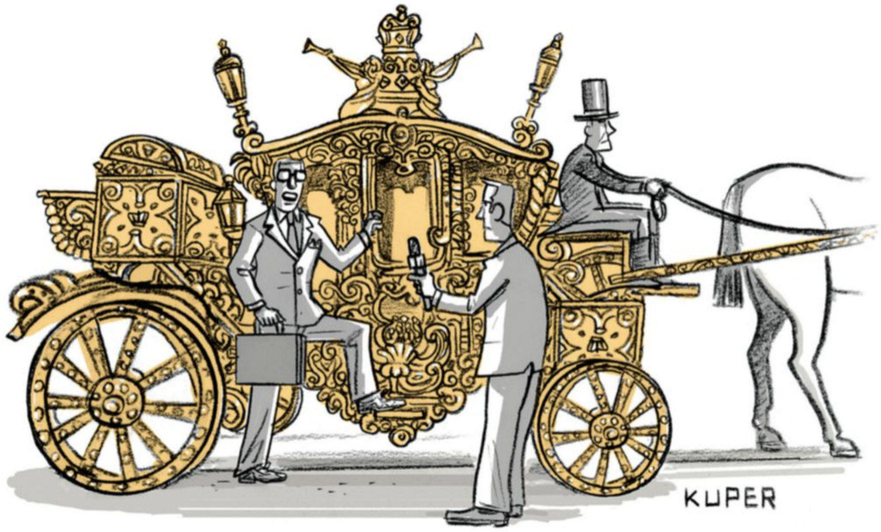
when you were ten and he laid concrete in your back yard for a basketball court. You know your dad could once play ball, knew the rhythm of the bounce, the head fake and eye swivel, pivot shit you learned how to do by putting in time. Sure, he leaned heavily on shots off the glass, but that was the way it used to be done. Your dad told you he hadn't been allowed to play ball in college because he was Indian in Oklahoma. Back in 1963, that was all it took. No Indians or dogs allowed on the courts or in bars. Your dad hardly ever talked about any of that—being Indian in Oklahoma, or even what he felt like now that he was a certifiable urban Indian. Except sometimes. When it suited him. Out of nowhere.

You'd be riding in your dad's red Ford truck to Blockbuster to rent a movie. You'd be listening to his peyote tapes. The tape-staticky gourd rattle and kettledrum boom. He liked to play it loud. You couldn't stand how noticeable the sound was. How noticeably Indian your dad was. You'd ask if you could turn it off. You'd put on 106 KMEL—rap or R. & B. But then he'd try to dance to that. He'd push his big Indian lips out to embarrass you, stick one flat hand out and stab at the air in rhythm to the beat, just to mess with you. That was when you'd turn the music off altogether. And that was when you might hear a story from your dad about his childhood. About how he used to pick cotton with his grandparents for a dime a day or the time an owl threw rocks at him and his friends from a tree or the time his great-grandma split a tornado in two with a prayer.

The chip you carry has to do with being born and raised in Oakland. A concrete chip, a slab, really, heavy on one side, the half side, the not-white side. As for your mom's side, as for your whiteness, there's too much and not enough there to know what to do with. You're from a people who took and took and took and took. And from a people taken. You're both and neither. In the bath, you'd stare at your brown arms against your white legs in the water and wonder what they were doing together on the same body, in the same bathtub.

How you ended up getting fired was related to your drinking, which was related to your skin problems, which was related to your father, which was related to history. The one story you were sure to hear from your dad, the one thing you knew for certain about what it means to be Indian, was that your people, Cheyenne people, on November 29, 1864, were massacred at Sand Creek. He told you and your sisters that story more than any other story he could muster. Your dad was the kind of drunk who disappears weekends, lands himself in jail. He was the kind of drunk who had to stop completely. Who couldn't have a drop. So you had it coming, in a way. That need that won't quit. That years-deep pit you were bound to dig, crawl into, struggle to get out of. Your parents maybe burned a too-wide God hole through you. The hole was unfillable.

Coming out of your twenties you started to drink every night. There were many reasons for this. But you did it without a thought. Most addictions aren't premeditated. You slept better. Drinking felt good. But mostly, if there was any real reason you could pinpoint, it was because of your skin. You'd always had skin problems. Your dad used to rub peyote gravy on your rashes. That worked for a while. Until he wasn't around anymore. The doctors wanted to call it eczema. They wanted you hooked on steroid creams. The scratching was bad because it only led to more scratching, which led to more bleeding. You'd wake up with blood under your fingernails—a sharp sting wherever the wound moved, because it moved everywhere, all over your body, and blood ended up on your sheets, and you'd wake up feeling like you'd dreamed something as important and devastating as it was forgotten. But there was no dream. There was only the open, living wound, and it itched somewhere on your body at all times. Patches and circles and fields of red and pink, sometimes yellow, bumpy, pus-y, weeping, disgusting—the surface of you. If you drank enough, you didn't scratch at night. You could deaden your body that way. You found your way in and out of a bottle. Found your limits. Lost track of them. Along the way, you figured out that there was a certain amount of alcohol you could drink that could—the next day—produce a certain state of mind, which you over time began to refer to privately as the State. The State was a place you could get to where everything felt exactly, precisely in place, where and when it belonged, you belonged, completely O.K. in it—almost like your dad used to say, "In'it," like, "Isn't that right? Isn't that true?" But each bottle you bought was a medicine or a poison, depending



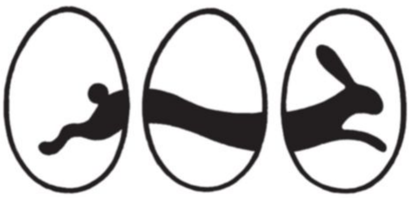
"It's with a heavy heart that I'm stepping down as C.E.O."

on whether you managed to keep it full enough. The method was unstable. Unsustainable. To drink enough but not too much for a drunk was like asking an evangelical not to say the name Jesus.

And so playing drums and singing in those classes had given you something else. A way to get there without having to drink and wait and see if the next day the State might emerge from the ashes. The State was based on something you read about James Hampton, years after your trip to D.C. James had given himself a title: Director of Special Projects for the State of Eternity. James was a Christian. You are not. But he was just crazy enough to make sense to you. This is what made sense: he spent fourteen years building an enormous piece of art work out of junk he collected in and around the garage he rented, which was about a mile from the White House. The piece was called "The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations' Millennium General Assembly." James made the throne for Jesus' second coming. What you get about James Hampton is his almost desperate devotion to God. To waiting for his God to come. He made a golden throne from junk. The throne you were building was made of moments, made of experiences in the State after excess drinking, made of leftover, unused drunkenness, kept overnight, dreamed, moon-soaked fumes you breathed into throne form, into a place where you could sit. In the State, you were just unhinged enough to not get in the way. The problem came from having to drink at all.

The night before you got fired, drum class was cancelled. It was the end of December. The approach of the New Year. This kind of drinking was not about reaching the State. This kind of drinking was careless, pointless—one of the risks, the consequences of being the kind of drunk you were. And will always be, no matter how well you learn to manage it. By night's end, you'd finished a fifth of Jim Beam. A fifth is a lot if you don't work your way up to it. It can take years to drink this way, alone, on random Tuesday nights. It takes a lot from you. Drinking this way. Your liver. The organ doing the most living for you, detoxifying all the shit you put into your body.

When you got to work the next day, you were fine. A little dizzy, still drunk, but the day felt normal enough. You went into the conference room. The powwow-committee meeting was happening. You ate what they called breakfast enchiladas when they offered them.



You met a new member of the committee. Then your supervisor, Jim, called you into his office, called on the two-way you kept on your belt. When you got to his office, he was on the phone. He covered it with one hand. "There's a bat," he said and pointed out to the hallway. "Get it out. We can't have bats. This is a medical facility." He said it like you'd brought the bat in yourself. Out in the hallway, you looked up and around you. You saw the thing on the ceiling in the corner near the conference room at the end of the hall. You went and got a trash bag and a broom. You approached the bat carefully, slowly, but when you got close it flew into the conference room. Everyone, the whole powwow committee, heads spinning, watched as you went in there and chased it out. In the hallway, the bat circled around you. It was behind you, and then it was on the back of your neck. It had its teeth or claws dug in. You freaked out and reached back and got the bat by a wing and instead of doing what you should have done—put it in the trash bag you were carrying with you—you brought your hands together and with all your strength, everything you had in you, you squeezed. You crushed the bat in your hands. Blood and thin bones and teeth in a mess in your hands. You threw it down. You would mop it up quick. Wipe clean the whole day. Start over again. But no. The whole powwow committee was there. They'd come out to watch you catch the bat after you'd chased the thing into their meeting. They looked at you with disgust. You felt it, too. It was on your hands. On the floor. That creature.

Back in your supervisor's office after you'd cleaned up the mess, Jim gestured for you to sit down. "I don't know what that was," he said. Both hands were on top of his head. "But it's not something we can tolerate in a medical facility."

"The thing fucking . . . Sorry, but the thing fucking bit me. I was reacting—"

"And that would have been O.K., Thomas. Only co-workers saw. And I was told you smell like alcohol. Coming to work drunk, I'm sorry, but that's a fireable offense. You know we have a zero-tolerance policy here."

He didn't look mad anymore. He looked disappointed. You almost told him that it was from the night before, but maybe that wouldn't have made a difference, because the alcohol was still in you, in your blood.

"I did not drink this morning," you said. You almost crossed your heart. You'd never even done that when you were a kid. It was something about Jim. He was like a big kid. He didn't want to have to punish you. Crossing your heart seemed like a reasonable way to convince Jim that you were telling the truth.

"I'm sorry," Jim said.

"So that's it? I'm being fired?"

"There's nothing I can do for you," Jim said. He stood up and walked out of his own office. "Go home, Thomas," he said.

You get down to the train platform and appreciate the cool wind or breeze or whatever you call the rush of air the train brings before it arrives, before you even see it or its lights, because of how much it cools your sweaty head. You find a seat at the front of the train. The robot voice announces the next stop, by saying or not saying, exactly, but whatever it's called when robots speak, "The next station is 12th Street Oakland City Center." You remember your first powwow. Your dad took you and your sisters—after the divorce—to a Berkeley high-school gym, where your old family friend Paul danced over the basketball lines with that crazy-light step, that grace, even though Paul was pretty big, and you'd

never thought of him as graceful before. But that day you saw what a powwow was and you saw that Paul was perfectly capable of grace and even some kind of Indian-specific cool, with footwork not unlike break dancing, and the effortlessness that cool requires.

The train moves and you think of your dad and how he took you to that powwow after the divorce, how he had never taken you before, when you were younger, and you wonder if it was your mom and her Christianity, the reason you didn't go to powwows or do more Indian things. The train emerges, rises out of the underground tube in the Fruitvale district, over by that Burger King and the terrible pho place, where East 12th and International almost merge, where the graffitied apartment walls and abandoned houses, warehouses, and auto-body shops appear, loom in the train window, stubbornly resist all of Oakland's new development. Just before the Fruitvale station, you see the old brick church you always notice because of how run-down and abandoned it looks. You feel a rush of sadness for your mom and her failed attempt to make you believe, for your failed family. How everyone lives in different states now. How you never see them. How you spend so much time alone. You want to cry and you feel as if you might, but know that you can't, that you shouldn't. Crying ruins you. You gave it up long ago. But the thoughts keep coming, about your mom and your family at a certain time when the magical over- and underworld of your Oakland-spun Christian evangelical end-of-the-world spirituality seemed to come to life to take you, all of you. You remember it so clearly, that time. Before anyone was awake, your mom was crying into her prayer book. You knew this because you saw the tearstains in her prayer book. You looked into that book more than once because you wanted to know what questions she might have asked God, what private conversations she might have had with Him, she who spoke that mad-angel language of tongues in church, she who fell to her knees, she who fell in love with your dad in Indian ceremonies that she later called demonic.

Your train leaves the Fruitvale station, which makes you think of Dimond Park, which makes you think of Vista Street. That was where it all happened, where your family lived and died. Your older sister, DeLonna, was heavily into PCP, angel dust. That was when you found out that you don't need religion to be slain, for the demons to come out with their tongues. One day after school, DeLonna smoked too much PCP. She came home and it was clear to you that she was out of her mind. You could see it in her eyes—DeLonna's eyes without DeLonna behind them. And then there was her voice, that low, deep, guttural sound. She yelled at your dad and he yelled back and she told him to shut up and he did shut up because of that voice. She told him that he didn't even know which God he was worshipping, and soon after that DeLonna was on the floor of your sister Christine's room, foaming at the mouth. Your mom called an emergency prayer circle—friends from church—and they prayed over her and she foamed and writhed and eventually stopped when that part of the high wore off, the drug dimmed, her eyes closed, the thing was done with her. When she woke up, your mom gave her a glass of milk, and when she was back, with her normal voice and her normal eyes, she didn't remember any of it. Later, your mom said that taking drugs was like sneaking under the gates into the Kingdom of Heaven. It seemed to you more like the Kingdom of Hell, but maybe the Kingdom of Heaven is bigger and more terrifying than we can ever know. Maybe we've all been speaking the broken tongue of angels and demons for too long to know that that's what we are, who we are, what we're speaking. Maybe we don't die but change, always in the State, without ever even knowing that we're in it.

When you get off at the Coliseum station, you walk over the pedestrian bridge with butterflies in your stomach. You do and don't want to be there. You want to drum but also to be heard drumming. Not as yourself but as the drum. The big drum sound that makes the dancers dance. You don't want to be seen by anyone from work. The shame of your drinking and showing up to work with the smell still on you is too much. Getting attacked by the bat and crushing it in front of them is part of it, too. You go through the metal detector at the front and your belt gets you another go-through. You get the beep the second time because of change in your pocket. The security guard is an older black guy who doesn't seem to care much about anything but avoiding the beeping of the detector. "Take it out, anything, anything in your pockets, take it out," he says.

"That's all I got," you say. But when you walk through it beeps again.

"You ever have surgery?" the guy asks you.

"What?"

"I don't know, maybe you have a metal plate in your head or—"

"Nah, man, I got nothing metal on me."

"Well, I gotta pat you down now," the guy says, like it's your fault.

"All right," you say and put your arms up.

After he pats you down, he gestures for you to walk through again. This time when it beeps he just waves you on. About ten feet away, you're looking down as you walk and you realize what it was. Your boots. Steel toe. You started wearing them when you got the job. Jim recommended it. You almost go back to tell the guy, but it doesn't matter anymore. You find Bobby Big Medicine under a canopy. He nods up then tilts his head toward an open seat around the drum. There's no small talk. "Grand Entry" song, Bobby says to you, because he knows everyone else knows. You pick up your drumstick and wait for the others. You hear the sound but not the words that the powwow m.c. is saying, and you watch for Bobby's stick to go up. When it does, it feels as though your heart stops. You wait for the first hit. You pray a prayer in your head to no one in particular about nothing in particular. You clear a way for a prayer by thinking nothing. Your prayer will be the hit and the song and the keeping of time. Your prayer will begin and end with the song. Your heart starts to hurt from lack of breath when you see his drumstick go up and you know they're coming, the dancers, and it's time. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM
Tommy Orange on Native-American representation in literature.

THE CRITICS

A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE SHOREBIRD

Rachel Carson and the rising of the seas.

BY JILL LEPORE

The house, on an island in Maine, perches on a rock at the edge of the sea like the aerie of an eagle. Below the white-railed back porch, the sea-slick rock slopes down to a lumpy low tideland of eelgrass and bladder wrack, as slippery as a knot of snakes. Periwinkles cling to rocks; mussels pinch themselves together like purses. A gull lands on a shaggy-weeded rock, fluffs itself, and settles into a crouch, bracing against a fierce wind rushing across the water, while, up on the cliff, lichen-covered trees—spruce and fir and birch—sigh and creak like old men on a damp morning.

"The shore is an ancient world," Rachel Carson wrote from a desk in that house, a pine-topped table wedged into a corner of a room where the screen door trembles with each breeze, as if begging to be unlatched. Long before Carson wrote "Silent Spring," her last book, published in 1962, she was a celebrated writer: the scientist-poet of the sea. "Undersea," her breakout essay, appeared in *The Atlantic* in 1937. "Who has known the ocean?" she asked. "Neither you nor I, with our earth-bound senses, know the foam and surge of the tide that beats over the crab hiding under the seaweed of his tide-pool home; or the lilt of the long, slow swells of mid-ocean, where shoals of wandering fish prey and are preyed upon, and the dolphin breaks the waves to breathe the upper atmosphere." It left readers swooning, drowning in the riptide of her language, a watery jabberwocky of mollusks and gills and tube worms and urchins and plankton and cunners, brine-drenched, rock-girt, sessile, arborescent, abyssal, spine-studded, radiolarian, silicious, and phosphorescent, while, here and there, "the lobster feels his way with nimble wariness through the perpetual twilight."

"Silent Spring," a landlubber, is no slouch of a book: it launched the environmental movement; provoked the passage of the Clean Air Act (1963), the Wilderness Act (1964), the National Environmental Policy Act (1969), the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act (both 1972); and led to the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency, in 1970. The number of books that have done as much good in the world can be counted on the arms of a starfish. Still, all of Carson's other books and nearly all of her essays concerned the sea. That Carson would be remembered for a book about the danger of back-yard pesticides like DDT would have surprised her in her younger years, when she was a marine biologist at the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries, writing memos about shad and pondering the inquiring snouts of whales, having specialized, during graduate school, in the American eel.

Carson was fiercely proud of "Silent Spring," but, all the same, it's heartbreaking to see that a new collection, "Silent Spring and Other Writings on the Environment," edited by Sandra Steingraber (Library of America), includes not one drop of her writing



Carson's domestic world may have shaped her understanding of the natural one; both, she learned, were complex and sometimes fragile ecosystems.



PHOTOGRAPH BY IRVING PENN

about the sea. Steingraber complains that, "while Carson's sea books occasionally allude to environmental threats, they call for no particular action," and, with that, sets them aside. Political persuasion is a strange measure of the worth of a piece of prose whose force lies in knowledge and wonder. In her first book, "Under the Sea-Wind" (1941), Carson wrote, "To stand at the edge of the sea, to sense the ebb and the flow of the tides, to feel the breath of a mist moving over a great salt marsh, to watch the flight of shore birds that have swept up and down the surf lines of the continents for untold thousands of years, to see the running of the old eels and the young shad to the sea, is to have knowledge of things that are as nearly eternal as any earthly life can be." She could not have written "Silent Spring" if she hadn't, for decades, scrambled down rocks, rolled up her pant legs, and waded into tide pools, thinking about how one thing can change another, and how, "over the eons of time, the sea has grown ever more bitter with the salt of the continents." She loved best to go out at night, with a flashlight, piercing the dread-black dark.

All creatures are made of the sea, as Carson liked to point out; "the great mother of life," she called it. Even land mammals, with our lime-hardened skeletons and our salty blood, begin as fetuses that swim in the ocean of every womb. She herself could not swim. She disliked boats. In all her childhood, she never so much as smelled the ocean. She tried to picture it: "I used to imagine what it would look like, and what the surf sounded like."

Carson was born in 1907 in western Pennsylvania, near the Allegheny River, in a two-story clapboard house on a sixty-four-acre farm with an orchard of apple and pear trees and a barnyard of a pig, a horse, and some chickens and sheep, a place not unlike the one she conjures up in the opening lines of "Silent Spring":

> There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings. The town lay in the midst of a checkerboard of prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of orchards where, in spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields. In autumn, oak and maple and birch set up a blaze of color that flamed and flickered across a backdrop of pines. Then foxes barked in the hills and deer silently crossed the fields, half hidden in the mists of the fall mornings.

The youngest of three children, she spent her childhood wandering the fields and hills. Her mother taught her the names of plants and the calls of animals. She read Beatrix Potter and "The Wind in the Willows." At age eight, she wrote a story about two wrens, searching for a house. "I can remember no time, even in earliest childhood, when I didn't assume I was going to be a writer," she said. "I have no idea why." Stories she wrote in her teens chronicled her discoveries: "the bobwhite's nest, tightly packed with eggs, the oriole's aerial cradle, the frame-work of sticks which the cuckoo calls a nest, and the lichen-covered home of the humming-bird."

And then: something of the coal-pit blight of smokestacked Pittsburgh invaded Carson's childhood when her father, who never made a go of much of anything except the rose garden he tended, began selling off bits of the family's farm; meadows became shops. It wasn't the scourge of pesticides, but, to Carson, it was a loss that allowed her to write with such clarity, in the opening of "Silent Spring," about the fate of an imagined American town sprayed with DDT:

> Then a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change. Some evil spell had settled on the community: mysterious maladies swept the flocks of chickens; the cattle sickened and died. Everywhere was a shadow of death. The farmers spoke of much illness among their families. In the town the doctors had become more and more puzzled by new kinds of sickness appearing among their patients. There had been several sudden and unexplained deaths, not only among the adults but even among children, who would be stricken suddenly while at play and die within a few hours.

Carson left home for the Pennsylvania College for Women, to study English. She sent poems to magazines—*Poetry, The Atlantic, Good Housekeeping, The Saturday Evening Post*—and made a collection of rejection slips, as strange as butterflies. Her mother sold apples and chickens and the family china to help pay the tuition and travelled from the farm to the college every weekend



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to type her daughter's papers (she later typed Carson's books, too), not least because, like so many mothers, she herself craved an education.

Carson, whose friends called her Ray, went to a college prom in 1928, but never displayed any romantic interest in men. She was, however, deeply passionate about her biology professor, Mary Scott Skinker. She changed her major, and followed Skinker to Woods Hole for a summer research project, which was how she came, at last, to see the ocean. By day, she combed the shore for hours on end, lost in a new world, enchanted by each creature. At night, she peered into the water off the docks to watch the mating of polychaete worms, bristles glinting in the moonlight.

Carson began graduate study in zoology at Johns Hopkins, completed a master's degree, and entered a Ph.D. program in 1932. Her entire family moved to Baltimore to live with her: her mother, her ailing father, her divorced sister, and her two very young nieces. Carson, the family's only wage earner, worked as a lab assistant and taught biology and zoology at Johns Hopkins and at the University of Maryland. As the Depression deepened, they lived, for a while, on nothing but apples. Eventually, Carson had to leave graduate school to take a better-paying job, in the public-education department of the Bureau of Fisheries, and brought in extra money by selling articles to the Baltimore *Sun*. Her best biographer, Linda Lear, writes gravely that one concerned oyster farming, while "three others continued her investigation into the plight of the shad."



Carson's father died in 1935, followed, two years later, by her older sister, leaving Carson to care for her mother and her nieces, ages eleven and twelve; she later adopted her grandnephew, when he was orphaned at the age of four. These obligations sometimes frustrated Carson, but not half as much as they frustrate her biographers. For Lear, the author of "Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature" (1997) and the editor of an excellent anthology, "Lost Woods: The Discovered Writing of Rachel Carson" (1998), Carson's familial obligations—in particular, the children—are nothing but burdens that "deprived her of privacy and drained her physical and emotional energy." Lear means this generously, as a way of accounting for why Carson didn't write more, and why, except for her *Sun* articles, she never once submitted a manuscript on time. But caring for other people brings its own knowledge. Carson came to see the world as beautiful, wild, animal, and vulnerable, each part attached to every other part, not only through prodigious scientific research but also through a lifetime of caring for the very old and the very young, wiping a dying man's brow, tucking motherless girls into bed, heating up dinners for a lonely little boy. The domestic pervades Carson's understanding of nature. "Wildlife, it is pointed out, is dwindling because its home is being destroyed," she wrote in 1938, "but the home of the wildlife is also our home." If she'd had fewer ties, she would have had less insight.

Early in her time at the Bureau of Fisheries, Carson drafted an eleven-page essay about sea life called "The World of Waters." The head of her department told her that it was too good for a government brochure and suggested that she send it to *The Atlantic*. After it was published, as "Undersea," Carson began writing her first book under the largesse of F.D.R.'s New Deal, in the sense that she drafted it on the back of National Recovery Administration stationery, while working for what became, in 1939, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "Under the Sea-Wind" appeared a few weeks before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and sank like a battleship.

Carson, who spent the meat-rationed war instructing housewives in how to cook little-known fish, grew restless. She pitched a piece to the *Reader's Digest* about DDT. During the war, chemical companies had sold the pesticide to the military to stop the spread of typhus by killing lice. After the war, they began selling DDT and other pesticides commercially, to be applied to farms and gardens. Carson, reading government reports on fish and wildlife, became alarmed: DDT hadn't been tested for civilian use, and many creatures other than insects appeared to be dying. She proposed an article on the pesticide, investigating "whether it may upset the whole delicate balance of nature if unwisely used." The *Reader's Digest* was not interested.

Writing at night, Carson began another book, hoping to bring to readers the findings of a revolution in marine biology and deep-sea exploration by offering an ecology of the ocean. "Unmarked and trackless though it may seem to us, the surface of the ocean is divided into definite zones," she explained. "Fishes and plankton, whales and squids, birds and sea turtles, are all linked by unbreakable ties to certain kinds of water." But the state of research also meant that mysteries abided: "Whales suddenly appear off the slopes of the coastal banks where the swarms of shrimplike krill are spawning, the whales having come from no one knows where, by no one knows what route."

Carson had taken on a subject and a field of research so wide-ranging that she began calling the book "Out of My Depth," or "Carson at Sea." She was haunted, too, by a sense of foreboding. In 1946, she'd had a cyst in her left breast removed. In 1950, her doctor found another cyst. After more surgery, she went to the seashore, Nags Head, North Carolina. "Saw tracks of a shore bird probably a sanderling, and followed them a little, then they turned toward the water and were soon obliterated by the sea," she wrote in field notes that she kept in spiral-bound notebooks. "How much it washes away, and makes as though it had never been."

When Carson finished the book, *The Atlantic* declined to publish an excerpt, deeming it too poetic. William Shawn, the editor of *The New Yorker,* did not share this reservation. "The Sea Around Us" appeared in these pages, in 1951, as a three-part Profile of the Sea, the magazine's first-ever profile of something other than a person. Letters from readers poured in—"I started reading with an o-dear-now-whats-this attitude, and found myself entranced," one wrote—and many declared it the most memorable thing ever published in the magazine and, aside from John Hersey's "Hiroshima," the best.

"The Sea Around Us" won the National Book Award, and remained on

the New York *Times* best-seller list for a record-breaking eighty-six weeks. Reissued, "Under the Sea-Wind" became a best-seller, too. "Who is the author?" readers wanted to know. Carson's forcefully written work drew the supposition from male reviewers that its female author must be half-man. A reporter for the Boston *Globe* wrote, "Would you imagine a woman who has written about the seven seas and their wonders to be a hearty physical type? Not Miss Carson. She is small and slender, with chestnut hair and eyes whose color has something of both the green and blue of sea water. She is trim and feminine, wears a soft pink nail polish and uses lipstick and powder expertly, but sparingly."

Carson shrugged that off and, resigning from her government post, began to question federal policy. When Eisenhower's new Secretary of the Interior, a businessman from Oregon, replaced scientists in the department with political hacks, Carson wrote a letter to the Washington *Post:* "The ominous pattern that is clearly being revealed is the elimination from the Government of career men of long experience and high professional competence and their replacement by political appointees."

But the greatest change wrought by Carson's success came when, with the earnings from her biography of the ocean, she bought a tiny patch of land atop a rock in Maine, and built a small cottage there, a Walden by the sea. Carson once dived underwater, wearing an eighty-four-pound sea-diving helmet, and lasted, eight feet below, for only fifteen clouded minutes. Her real love was the shore: "I can't think of any more exciting place to be than down in the low-tide world, when the ebb tide falls very early in the morning, and the world is full of salt smell, and the sound of water, and the softness of fog." To fathom the depths, she read books; the walls of her house in Maine are lined with them, crammed between baskets and trays filled with sea glass and seashells and sea-smoothed stones. She wrote some of her next book, "The Edge of the Sea," from that perch.

"My quarrel with almost all seashore books for the amateur," she reflected, "is that they give him a lot of separate little capsules of information about a series of creatures, which are never firmly placed in their environment." Carson's seashore book was different, an explanation of the shore as a system, an *ecosystem*, a word most readers had never heard before, and one that Carson herself rarely used but instead conjured, as a wave of motion and history:

> In my thoughts these shores, so different in their nature and in the inhabitants they support, are made one by the unifying touch of the sea. For the differences I sense in this particular instant of time that is mine are but the differences of a moment, determined by our place in the stream of time and in the long rhythms of the sea. Once this rocky coast beneath me was a plain of sand; then the sea rose and found a new shore line. And again in some shadowy future the surf will have ground these rocks to sand and will have returned the coast to its earlier state. And so in my mind's eye these coastal forms merge and blend in a shifting, kaleidoscopic pattern in which there is no finality, no ultimate and fixed reality—earth becoming fluid as the sea itself.

Paul Brooks, Carson's editor at Houghton Mifflin, once said that, as a writer, she was like "the stonemason who never lost sight of the cathedral." She was a meticulous editor; so was he. "Spent time on the Sand chapter with a pencil between my teeth," he wrote to her. But she didn't like being fixed up and straightened out, warning Brooks, "I am apt to use what may appear to be a curious inversion of words or phrases"—her brine-drenched jabberwocky—"but for the most part these are peculiar to my style and I don't want them changed."

Writing by the edge of the sea, Rachel



"The bathroom? Ah, yes, the bathroom—well, let me tell you about the bathroom."

Carson fell in love. She met Dorothy Freeman in 1953 on the island in Maine where Carson built her cottage and where Freeman's family had summered for years. Carson was forty-six, Freeman fifty-five. Freeman was married, with a grown son. When she and Carson weren't together, they maintained a breathless, passionate correspondence. "Why do I keep your letters?" Carson wrote to Freeman that winter. "Why? Because I love you!" Carson kept her favorite letters under her pillow. "I love you beyond expression," Freeman wrote to Carson. "My love is boundless as the Sea."

Both women were concerned about what might become of their letters. In a single envelope, they often enclosed two letters, one to be read to family (Carson to her mother, Freeman to her husband), one to be read privately, and likely destined for the "Strong box"—their code for letters to be destroyed. "Did you put them in the Strong box?" Carson would ask Freeman. "If not, please do." Later, while Carson was preparing her papers, which she'd pledged to give to Yale, Freeman read about how the papers of the writer Dorothy Thompson, recently opened, contained revelations about her relationships with women. Freeman wrote to Carson, "Dear, please, use the Strong box quickly," warning that their letters could have "meanings to people who were looking for ideas." (They didn't destroy all of them: those that survive were edited by Freeman's granddaughter and published in 1995.)

After the publication of "The Edge of the Sea" (1955), another best-seller that was also serialized in *The New Yorker*, Shawn wanted Carson to write a new book, to appear in the magazine, on nothing less than "the universe." And she might have tackled it. But, when her niece Marjorie died of pneumonia, Carson adopted Marjorie's four-year-old son, Roger, a little boy she described as "lively as seventeen crickets." She set aside longer writing projects until, with some reluctance, she began work on a study whose title, for a long time, was "Man Against the Earth."



"Well, Martha, I certainly hope your Scrabble victories keep you warm at night!"

In January, 1958, members of a citizens' Committee Against Mass Poisoning flooded newspapers in the Northeast with letters to the editor calling attention to the dire consequences of local and statewide insecticide aerial-spraying programs: the insects weren't dying, but everything else was. One Massachusetts housewife and bird-watcher, Olga Owens Huckins, who called the programs "inhumane, undemocratic and probably unconstitutional," wrote a letter to Carson. The committee had filed a lawsuit in New York, and Huckins suggested that Carson cover the story.

Carson had wanted to write about the destruction of the environment ever since the bombing of Hiroshima and the first civilian use of DDT, in 1945. Nevertheless, she couldn't possibly leave Roger and her ailing mother to report on a trial in New York. In February, she wrote to E. B. White, "It is my hope that you might cover these court hearings for *The New Yorker.*" White demurred—he later told Carson that he didn't "know a chlorinated hydrocarbon from a squash bug"—and said that she should write the story, forwarding Carson's letter to Shawn. In June, Carson went to New York and pitched the story to Shawn. "We don't usually think of *The New Yorker* as changing the world," he told her, "but this one time it might."

Freeman, wise woman, was worried that the chemical companies would go after Carson, relentlessly and viciously. Carson reassured her that she had taken that into account, but that, "knowing what I do, there would be no future peace for me if I kept silent." Marjorie Spock, the daughter of the pediatrician, sent Carson reports from the trial, while Carson did her research from home, in Maryland and Maine, often with Roger at her side. She absorbed a vast scientific literature across several realms, including medicine, chemistry, physiology, and biology, and produced an explanation written with storybook clarity. Freeman wrote to Carson that she was "like the Mother Gull with her cheese sandwich," chewing it up before feeding it to her young.

Carson wrote back, "Perhaps a subtitle of *Man Against the Earth* might be 'What the Mother Gull Brought Up.'"

In the fall of 1958, her mother had a stroke. Carson cared for her at home. Carson's mother had taught her birdsongs; the first time they visited Maine together, Carson had taken an inventory: "And then there were the sounds of other, smaller birds—the rattling call of the kingfisher that perched, between forays after fish, on the posts of the dock; the call of the phoebe that nested under the eaves of the cabin; the redstarts that foraged in the birches on the hill behind the cabin and forever, it seemed to me, asked each other the way to Wiscasset, for I could easily twist their syllables into the query, 'Which is Wiscasset? Which is Wiscasset?'"



Late in the autumn of Carson's mother's illness, Spock sent her a record album of birdsongs. Carson listened with Roger, teaching him each song. "He has a very sweet feeling for all living things and loves to go out with me and look and listen to all that goes on," she wrote to Spock. Carson's mother died that December, at the age of eighty-nine. The spring of 1959 was Carson's first spring without her mother. "Over increasingly large areas of the United States, spring now comes unheralded by the return of the birds, and the early mornings are strangely silent where once they were filled with the beauty of bird song," Carson would write. It was Paul Brooks who had the idea of using the title of the chapter on birds as the title for the entire book: "Silent Spring." A season of grief.

And, still, Carson worried that she herself might be silenced. She grew sick; she and Freeman told hardly anyone, not even Brooks. Early in 1960, while immersed in a growing scientific literature on the consequences for humans "of the never-ending stream of chemicals of which pesticides are a part, chemicals now pervading the world in which we live, acting upon us directly and indirectly, separately and collectively," as if we were all fish, swimming in a poisoned sea, she found more lesions on her left breast.

On April 4, 1960, Carson had a radical mastectomy. Her surgeon provided her with no information about the tumors or the tissue he'd removed and recommended no follow-up treatment; when she asked him questions, he lied to her, as was common practice, especially with female patients. The surgery had been brutal and the recovery was slow. "I think I have solved the troublesome problem of the cancer chapters," she wrote to Brooks from Maine in September. But by November she'd found more lumps, this time on her ribs. She consulted another doctor, and began radiation treatments. In December, she finally confided in Brooks.

Carson kept her cancer secret because she was a private person, but also because she didn't want to give the chemical companies the chance to dismiss her work as having been motivated by her illness, and perhaps because, when the time came, she didn't want them to pull their punches; the harder they came after her, the worse they'd look. This required formidable stoicism. Beginning early in 1961, she was, on and off, in a wheelchair. One treatment followed another: more surgery, injections (one doctor recommended injections of gold). One illness followed another: the flu, staph infections, rheumatoid arthritis, eye infections. "Such a catalogue of illnesses!" she wrote to Freeman. "If one were superstitious it would be easy to believe in some malevolent influence at work, determined by some means to keep the book from being finished."

Early on, Carson was told that she had "a matter of months." She was afraid of dying, but she was terrified of dying before she could finish the book. Freeman, who thought the work itself was killing Carson, or at least impeding her ability to fight the cancer, urged her to abandon the book she'd planned and to produce, instead, something much shorter, and be done with it. "Something would be better than nothing, I guess," Carson mused, weighing the merits of recasting her pages into something "greatly boiled down" and "perhaps more philosophic in tone." She decided against it, and in January, 1962, submitted to *The New Yorker* a nearly complete draft of the book.

Shawn called her at home to tell her

that he'd finishing reading and that the book was "a brilliant achievement." He said, "You have made it literature, full of beauty and loveliness and depth of feeling." Carson, who had been quite unsure she'd survive to finish writing the book, was sure, for the first time, that the book was going to do in the world what she'd wanted it to do. She hung up the phone, put Roger to bed, picked up her cat, and burst into tears, collapsing with relief.

"Silent Spring" appeared in *The New Yorker*, in three parts, in June, 1962, and as a book, published by Houghton Mifflin, in September. Everything is connected to everything else, she showed. "We poison the caddis flies in a stream and the salmon runs dwindle and die," Carson wrote:

> We poison the gnats in a lake and the poison travels from link to link of the food chain and soon the birds of the lake margins become its victims. We spray our elms and the following springs are silent of robin song, not because we sprayed the robins directly but because the poison traveled, step by step, through the now familiar elm-leaf-earthworm cycle. These are matters of record, observable, part of the visible world around us. They reflect the web of life—or death—that scientists know as ecology.

Its force was felt immediately. Readers wrote to share their own stories. "I can go into the feed stores here and buy, without giving any reason, enough poison to do away with all the people in Oregon," one gardener wrote. They began calling members of Congress. E. B. White wrote to Carson, declaring the pieces to be "the most valuable articles the magazine had ever published." At a press conference at the White House on August 29th, a reporter asked President Kennedy whether his Administration intended to investigate the long-range side effects of DDT and other pesticides. "Yes," he answered. "I know that they already are, I think particularly, of course, since Miss Carson's book."

"What she wrote started a national quarrel," "CBS Reports" announced in a one-hour special, "The Silent Spring of Rachel Carson," in which footage of Carson was intercut with footage of government and industry spokesmen, to create a de-facto debate. (Carson refused to make any other television appearance.) In the program, Carson sits on the porch of her white-railed house in Maine, wearing a skirt and cardigan; the chief spokesman for the insecticide industry, Robert White-Stevens, of American Cyanamid, wears thick black-framed glasses and a white coat, standing in a chemistry lab, surrounded by beakers and Bunsen burners.

White-Stevens questions Carson's expertise: "The major claims of Miss Rachel Carson's book, 'Silent Spring,' are gross distortions of the actual fact, completely unsupported by scientific experimental evidence and general practical experience in the field."

Carson feigns perplexity: "Can anyone believe it is possible to lay down such a barrage of poisons on the surface of the earth without making it unfit for all life?"

White-Stevens fumes: "Miss Carson maintains that the balance of nature is a major force in the survival of man, whereas the modern chemist, the modern biologist and scientist believes that man is steadily controlling nature."

Carson rebuts: "Now, to these people, apparently, the balance of nature was something that was repealed as soon as man came on the scene. Well, you might just as well assume that you could repeal the law of gravity."

He may be wearing the lab coat, but, against Carson's serenity, it's White-Stevens who comes across as the crank. Carson wasn't so much calm, though, as exhausted. She was fifty-five; she looked twenty years older. (She told Freeman she felt ninety.) She begged Freeman not to tell anyone about the cancer: "There is no reason even to say I have not been well. If you want or think you need give any negative report, say I had a bad time with iritis that delayed my work, but it has cleared up nicely. And that you *never saw me look better.* Please say that." But, if no one knew, it was not hard to see. When Carson was interviewed by CBS, she wore a heavy wig; she had lost her hair. She was not shown standing, which would have been difficult: the cancer had spread to her vertebrae; her spine was beginning to collapse. After the CBS reporter Eric Sevareid interviewed Carson, he told his producer Jay McMullen that the network ought to air the program as soon as possible. "Jay," he said, "you've got a dead leading lady."

In December, while shopping for a Christmas present for Roger—a record-player—Carson fainted from pain and weakness. The tumors kept spreading. "CBS Reports" aired "The Silent Spring of Rachel Carson" in April, 1963. The following month, Carson testified before Congress.

By fall, the cancer had moved into her pelvic bone. She wrote, "I moan inside—and I wake in the night and cry out silently for Maine." When Carson delivered what would be her final public speech, "Man Against Himself," hobbling to the stage with the use of a cane, a local newspaper described her as a "middle-aged, arthritis-crippled spinster." She wrote to Freeman that returning to Maine "is only a dream—a lovely dream."

Rachel Carson did not see the ocean again. Nor would she be remembered for what she wrote about the sea, from its shore to its depths. "The dear old *Sea Around Us* has been displaced," Freeman wrote, with sorrow. "When people talk about you they'll say 'Oh yes, the author of *Silent Spring*,' for I suppose there are people who never heard of *The Sea Around Us*."

Early on the morning of April 14, 1964, Freeman wrote to Carson, wondering how she'd slept and wishing her the beauty of spring: "I can be sure you wake up to bird song." Carson died before dusk. Three weeks later, on their island in Maine, Freeman poured Carson's ashes into the sea. "Every living thing of the ocean, plant and animal alike, returns to the water at the end of its own life span the materials which had been temporarily assembled to form its body," Carson once wrote. Freeman sat on a rock and watched the tide go out.

Before Carson got sick, and even after, when she still believed she might get better, she thought that she'd take up, for her next book, a subject that fascinated her. "We live in an age of rising seas," she wrote. "In our own lifetime we are witnessing a startling alteration of climate." She died before she could begin, wondering, till the end, about the swelling of the seas.

This spring, in the North Atlantic, not a single newborn right whale has been spotted: the water, it seems, is too warm; the mothers have birthed no calves. The sea is all around us. It is our home. And the last calf is our, inconsolable, loss. ♦

BOOKS

TALES OF THE TRIBE

Why Jewish history is so hard to write.

BY ADAM KIRSCH



Histories of the Jews reveal a lot about the times in which they were written.

"Can there be a history of a slave?" When Isaak Markus Jost asked this question, in the introduction to his "General History of the Israelite People," published in 1832, it was by no means clear that Jewish history was a viable scholarly discipline. To many people, Jost knew, it might seem that the important part of the Jewish story had ended with the Bible, leaving only a long sequel of passive suffering. "It is commonly held that where independent activity has ceased, there too history has ceased," he noted. And where was the independent activity in Jewish history? Ever since Judea was crushed by the Roman Empire, the Jews had possessed none of the things that made for the usual history of a nation: territory, sovereignty, power, armies, kings. Instead, the noteworthy events in Jewish history were expulsions, such as the ones that drove the Jews out of England, in 1290, and Spain, in 1492, or massacres, such as the ones that cost thousands of Jewish lives in the Rhineland during the Crusades and in Ukraine in the seventeenth century.

To a generation of German scholars engaged in inventing what they called *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, "the science of Judaism," it was crucial to overcome this despairing view. Above all, it was necessary to rebut the greatest historical thinker of the age, Hegel, who had elevated the writing of history into a branch of philosophy. Hegel saw the entirety of world history—or, at least, of European history, which for him was what counted—as a progressive revelation of the spirit. Each civilization had its contribution to make to the formation of humanity; when it had done so, it inevitably crumbled, making way for the next stage.

This scheme had trouble explaining one civilization in particular. In the early nineteenth century, there were no more Egyptian dynasties, Greek city-states, or Roman emperors; but there were still Jews, practicing the same religion that their ancestors had, millennia earlier. For Hegel, the historical function of Judaism ceased once its values had been universalized by Christianity: "The Temple of Zion is destroyed; the God-serving nation is scattered to the winds." So what explained the Jewish refusal to fade into history?

The first modern historians of Judaism converged on the idea that it endured because its contribution to human civilization was of eternal relevance. This contribution was characterized by various writers as "the unlimited unity of the all," "the universal spirit which is within us," or "the God-idea." What they shared was a conviction that Judaism was defined by ethical monotheism and Messianic hope. If Jews never stopped preaching these ideas, it was because the world always stood in need of them. In the words of Heinrich Graetz, the greatest of nineteenth-century Jewish historians, "Judaism is not a religion of the present but of the future," which looks "forward to the ideal future age . . . when the knowledge of God and the reign of justice and contentment shall have united all men in the bonds of brotherhood."

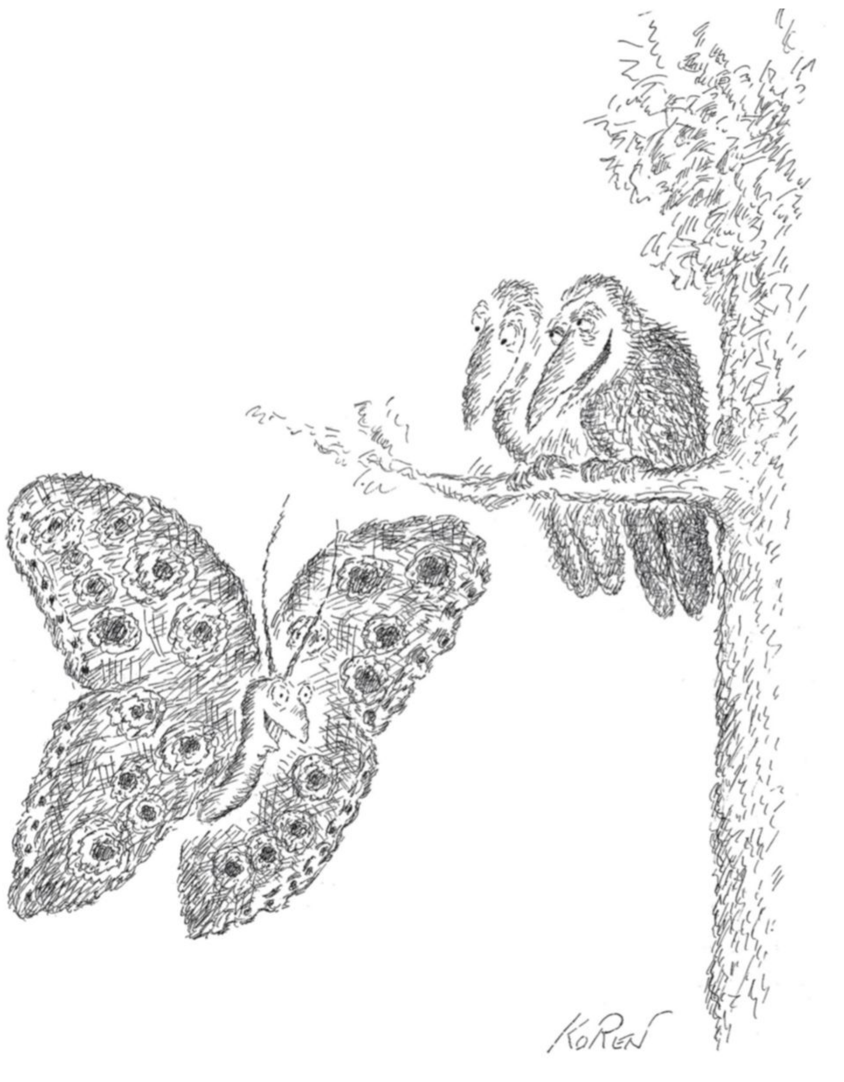
Such arguments spoke to and for a generation of European Jews who wanted to enter the mainstream of European society, not as supplicants but as the proud bearers of a valuable tradition. If Judaism was less a set of ancient customs and dogmas than a progressive, eternally renewed spirit, then it could take new forms suited to the modern world. It is no coincidence that the era of the "science of Judaism" also saw the birth of the Reform movement, which sought to reimagine Jewish worship. Since Jewishness was defined by an idea rather than by a nationality, for instance, it stood to reason that Jews would no longer need

ILLUSTRATION BY LEIGH GULDIG

to pray for the restoration of their lost state in the land of Israel. It was unnecessary, a group of Reform rabbis announced in 1845, because "our newly gained status as citizens constitutes a partial fulfillment of our messianic hopes." They meant as citizens of Germany, where it seemed that Jews could look forward to a future free of ancient prejudices.

As this bleak irony suggests, every generation of historians draws a picture of the Jewish past that is bound up with what they think about the Jewish future. And those visions of the future generally turn out to be wrong, because the past two centuries have seen continual, radical upheavals in Jewish life. After the French Revolution and Napoleon's conquests brought legal emancipation to Jews in much of Western Europe, for instance, many Jews began to think of their Jewishness as a private matter, an individual religious choice. They were not Jews who happened to live in France, say, the way other Jews in the past had lived in Spain or Persia, but "Frenchmen of the Mosaic faith." But the persistence of anti-Semitism, as demonstrated in the Dreyfus Affair, convinced a later generation of Jews that this was a vain hope—that Jews were indeed a nation, and had better find a state of their own if they were to survive. This was the conclusion that turned Theodor Herzl, a highly assimilated Viennese journalist who barely observed Jewish customs, into the founder of modern Zionism.

The Russian Revolution, the Holocaust, the creation of the State of Israel, the rise of American Jewry—each of these developments put its own stamp on the meaning of Jewishness, and of the Jewish past. How, then, does that past appear from the vantage point of our own moment? What does being a Jewish historian in the twenty-first century allow one to see, and what does it obscure? These are the questions raised by two major new surveys of the subject: "A History of Judaism" (Princeton), by Martin Goodman, and "The Story of the Jews: Volume Two: Belonging, 1492-1900" (Ecco), the newest installment of a trilogy by Simon Schama.



"Think ephemeral!"

In certain obvious ways, the two books present very different approaches to the topic. Goodman, as his title declares, is interested in the history of Judaism—that is, of the religious ideas and practices that have defined Jewish life over the millennia. He discusses matters like the order of sacrifices in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, the doctrinal arguments between different Jewish sects in the Roman Empire, and the varieties of Jewish mysticism, or Kabbalah. Schama, on the other hand, is less interested in Judaism than in Jews—individual human beings who have thrived and suffered. His subjects are by no means the people who did most to shape the Judaism of their time: we meet only a few theologians or rabbis in these pages. Rather, Schama is fascinated by figures like Dan Mendoza, a celebrity boxer in late-eighteenth-century England, and Uriah Levy, a Jewish lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, who purchased Thomas Jefferson's house, Monticello, in 1834. "The Story of the Jews" is a pageant of microhistories, told in an engaging and dramatic style, which some novelist or playwright ought to plunder for material, the way Shakespeare used Holinshed's Chronicles.

Despite this difference in focus, however, it is clear that Goodman and Schama, who both grew up Jewish in Britain after the Second World War, share some basic assumptions about what Jewish history teaches. For one thing, unlike their Germanic predecessors, they are empiricists. Neither has any interest in metaphysical principles or historical missions; they do not aim to justify Judaism as a constructive force in world history. These aspects of the Jewish historian's work have dropped away, partly under the pressure of modern conceptions of scholarly detachment, and partly thanks to a greater confidence in the right of Jews to have their story told.

Instead, Goodman and Schama emphasize the diversity within Judaism. In keeping with the temper of the times—

or what that temper seemed to be, until fairly recently—they are in favor of pluralism and against essentialism. This can be seen in the way each chooses to begin the story of the Jews. One might think that the obvious approach would be to begin at the beginning, with Abraham, who, in the Book of Genesis, is called by God to be the father of a great nation. This was the origin of the Jewish people, according to its own age-old self-understanding: Jewish tradition refers to "Abraham our father," emphasizing the biological kinship between members of the same people.

But, of course, Judaism is not the name of a people; it is the name of a religion, a system of beliefs and practices. Perhaps, then, the story should begin with "Moses our teacher," the lawgiver who brought God's commandments down from Mount Sinai. It was Moses who turned being Jewish into a way of life, involving everything from ethical behavior (thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal) to inscrutable rituals and taboos (thou shalt not wear a garment made of mixed linen and wool). It is perhaps this double founding—by Abraham and Moses, as a people and as a faith—that is the key to the Jews' historical durability.

However, neither Abraham nor Moses is available as a starting point for a modern historian, for the simple reason that neither of them can be proved to have existed. Indeed, for a scholar who subscribes to critical and scientific canons of evidence, it is quite certain that they did not exist, since their stories are full of things that could not possibly have happened: the voices from Heaven, the burning bush, the parting of the Red Sea. Instead, the secular historian must find a starting point that is well attested in non-Biblical evidence, and work forward from there. Already, in this decision, Jewish memory is separated from Jewish history; the latter must study the former, but must not rely on it.

For Schama, in the first volume of his "Story of the Jews," this means starting in 475 B.C.E., in the Jewish settlement of Elephantine, in Egypt. (Writers of Jewish history conventionally use the initials C.E. and B.C.E., "Common Era" and "before the Common Era," instead of the explicitly Christian "anno Domini" and "before Christ," though the numbering of years remains the same.) At that time, we know from recovered papyrus fragments, there was a thriving colony of Jewish soldiers in southern Egypt, serving as border guards for the Persian Empire. Indeed, they built their own temple to worship in. To anyone using the Bible as a guide to the Jewish past, this might seem bizarre and even outrageous. Isn't Egypt the place the Jews were supposed to have left for good in the exodus? Doesn't the Bible warn innumerable times that there should be only one temple, in Jerusalem, and that offering sacrifices anywhere else is a sin?



Right off the bat, then, Schama shows that actual Jewish history is considerably more complex than the official story allows. Jews were always diasporic, living outside the land of Israel as well as in it. And Jews were always religiously innovative, contesting the centralized authority of priesthood and orthodoxy. In Schama's treatment, the Jews of Elephantine sound remarkably like many American Jews today: "worldly, cosmopolitan, vernacular."

For Schama, Jewishness comprises anything Jews have done, in all the very different places and ways they have lived. The boxer Dan Mendoza was a Jew, and so was Esperanza Malchi, the confidante of a sixteenth-century royal consort in the Ottoman court—just as fully as canonical figures like Moses Maimonides, the medieval Jewish philosopher, or Theodor Herzl. Schama offers an appealingly democratic and humanistic approach to Jewish history. It is also a way of telling the story that focusses on the interactions of Jews with the non-Jewish cultures in which they lived. That is partly because of the nature of the surviving historical sources—Jews who became notable in the wider, Gentile world necessarily had an unusual degree of contact with that world—and partly because Schama is not very interested in religious practice and texts.

"Is Judaism a self-sufficient or an open culture?" he asks. "Were Torah, Bible, Talmud, and the myriad interpretive texts obsessively commenting on them . . . enough unto themselves for leading an authentically Jewish life?" The negative answer is implied in the word "obsessively." Schama, who, like many modern Western Jews, inhabits a very open Jewish world, finds the allure of an earlier, more closed-off religion hard to understand. When he does characterize Jews at prayer, the result is ambivalent: "It's only the Christians who bow their heads and shut their mouths in their houses of prayer. Us, we chant, we gabble, we cantillate, we shout." This is meant affectionately, but it does not seem to enter sympathetically into the spiritual world from which those prayers emerged.

Perhaps for similar reasons, in the second volume of his epic, Schama devotes disproportionate attention to Jews living in Western Europe and the United States, who, in the early modern period, were mostly of Sephardic ancestry, and comparatively little to the Ashkenazi Jews of Eastern Europe. (The names of these two major branches of European Jewry come from the Hebrew names of their countries of origin: Ashkenaz was Germany, Sepharad was Spain.) Yet, by the nineteenth century, Eastern Europe was home to a large majority of the world's Jews, who lived in a comprehensively Jewish society, in a way that the smaller communities of Venice or Amsterdam or Colonial America did not. The Eastern European experience fits less well into Schama's picture of Jewish history, which emphasizes the ways Jews sought to belong—that is, to belong in Christian society. Of course, Schama uses the subtitle "Belonging" with full knowledge of its ambiguity, since it names a hope that was to be frustrated in most of Europe.

For Goodman, by contrast, the Jewish story has much more to do with shared ideas and beliefs. He is interested in what made Jews Jews, rather than in what made them simply human. But he, too, emphasizes that Jewishness was never a simple or unitary identity, and he, too, mistrusts the Bible as a source of historical evidence. That is why he begins his book not with the Biblical origin stories but with the retelling of those stories by a Jew, Flavius Josephus, who lived in the first century C.E., well into the period of recorded history. Indeed, we know

about this period of Jewish history in large part thanks to Josephus, whose colossal work "Jewish Antiquities" undertook to record the entire history of the Jews, for the benefit of a non-Jewish, Greek-speaking audience. (He was, one might say, the Schama or Goodman of the ancient world.)

What Josephus reveals is that the Judaism of his day was diverse, contested, and, in the light of later Jewish tradition, positively strange. In the first century C.E., Goodman explains, there were Pharisees, who held to a strict interpretation of inherited legal traditions, and Sadducees, who grounded their beliefs in the words of the Torah alone. Then there were the Essenes, a remote, ascetic community with strong apocalyptic leanings who shared property in common. Finally, there were the followers of what Josephus terms "the fourth philosophy," theocratic zealots who believed that the Jews should not be governed by any human ruler, but only by God. This is not to mention the bewildering variety of Messianic prophets and charismatic teachers who populated Judea at the time—including Jesus of Nazareth, whose followers soon left Judaism behind entirely.

The later history of the Jews, Goodman shows, is full of similar divisions. The Talmud, the compilation of Jewish law and commentary that was written in the years 200-500 C.E., bears witness to a distinction between "friends," who undertook to keep Jewish law strictly, and "people of the land," who were ignorant of the fine points and couldn't be trusted to, for instance, tithe their crops properly. In the early Middle Ages, Rabbinite Jews, who honored the Talmud, were challenged by Karaites, who rejected it. And, in the eighteenth century, the new charismatic and pietistic movement known as Hasidism faced fierce opposition from traditionalists, who called themselves *mitnagdim*, "opponents."

It is tempting to draw a straight line from these disputatious eras of Jewish history to the modern period, which is the subject of Goodman's last chapter. Today, there are significant and often acrimonious divisions between Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Jews; between Zionist and anti-Zionist Jews; between secular, assimilated Jews and *haredim*, the ultra-Orthodox who reject modernity entirely. Some of these groups don't consider the others to be real Jews at all, just as the Rabbinites felt about the Karaites a thousand years ago. Perhaps we can say, with Ecclesiastes, that there is nothing new under the sun.

However, this would be to underestimate the radical changes that modernity has brought to Judaism, as it has to all religious traditions. Indeed, the very existence of books like Schama's and Goodman's can be taken as a sign of the modern difference. According to the late historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, modern Jewish historiography rejects "premises that were basic to all Jewish conceptions of history in the past." That is the central argument of Yerushalmi's 1982 book, "Zakhor," one of the most influential works on Jewish history of the last half century. "*Zakhor*" is the Hebrew word for "remember," a command delivered many times in the Bible, and it is possible to see Judaism itself as a technology of memory, a set of practices designed to make the past present. Read the Bible closely and you will find that the holiday of Passover, which commemorates the Jews' exodus from Egypt, is established by Moses before the exodus actually takes place. It is as though the miracle happens primarily so that it can be remembered.

But memory, Yerushalmi points out, does not require the writing of history. The two may even be opposed. Certainly, from Josephus until the rise of modern scholarship, in the nineteenth century, there was no Jewish historiography to speak of. Instead, Jews connected with their past through parable and ritual, story and symbol, ways of remembering that are generally at odds with the methods and conclusions of modern historians. A good example is the way Jewish tradition understood one of the most traumatic and consequential events in Jewish history: the Jewish War of 66-73 C.E., a revolt against Roman imperial rule that ended with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the depopulation of the territory then known as Judea. (A few decades later, the province was renamed Syria Palaestina, after the Jews' traditional enemies, the Philistines; this is the origin of the name Palestine.)

Today, all historians derive most of what they know about these events from Josephus' other major work, "The Jewish War." Josephus was both participant and observer in the events he wrote about: a commander in the rebel Jewish forces, he was taken prisoner and became a courtier of the Roman emperor Vespasian. Thanks to him, we know a great deal about the complex political, military, dynastic, and religious reasons for the Jewish defeat. Yet, in the centuries after the destruction of the Temple, most Jews were not reading Josephus. Tellingly, the original text of his book, written in Aramaic for a Jewish audience, has not survived. Only the Greek translation was preserved, by Christians who saw it as important for understanding Jesus' world.

For Jews, the story of what happened to the Temple was to be found elsewhere, in the Talmud, which offered its own explanation for the tragedy: it was all because of a misdelivered invitation. As the story goes, a certain man in Jerusalem decided to give a party, and he sent a servant to invite his friend Kamza. Unfortunately, the servant got confused and fetched the similarly named Bar Kamza, who was the host's enemy. When Bar Kamza showed up, the host refused to let him stay, persisting in his rudeness even when Bar Kamza offered to pay for all the food and drink.

Deeply insulted, not just by the host but by all the rabbis who were present and did nothing, Bar Kamza decided to get revenge. He went to the Roman emperor and lodged an accusation, saying that the Jews were rebelling and would refuse to offer sacrifices in his imperial honor. When the emperor tested the charge by sending a calf to the Temple for sacrifice, Bar Kamza mutilated it in such a way that it would be ritually impure. The rabbis duly refused to allow it to be sacrificed; the emperor was enraged and sent his legions—and so, the Talmud concludes, "our House has been destroyed, our Temple burnt and we ourselves exiled from our land."

If Josephus' account had been lost, as so many important ancient texts were lost, the story of Kamza and Bar Kamza would be our primary source for one of the most important events in Jewish history. In other words, we would know basically nothing about it, since the tale is self-evidently not a historical account but a parable. It underlines what the Talmud says elsewhere, that

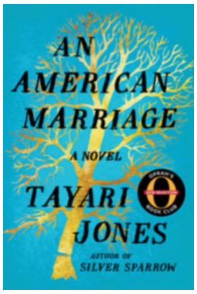
the catastrophe was caused by "baseless hatred" between Jews: the spitefulness of the host and the vengefulness of Bar Kamza resulted in ruin for the whole people. Interestingly, this is essentially the same verdict that Josephus delivers, except that, instead of a personal dispute over a party invitation, he talks about the deadly rivalry between political and religious factions. Perhaps there is a limit to the amount of division a community can tolerate.

The Talmudic story condenses these complex events into a usable moral lesson. That is how the past turns into living memory, even at the price of falsification. Historians like Schama and Goodman are honor-bound to avoid that kind of edifying distortion. "My attempt to present an objective history of Judaism may strike some readers as naive," Goodman writes, in his introduction. Better to say that it is this very conception of what it means to be objective that marks Schama and Goodman as products of one particular moment in Jewish history. The notion that Judaism is about diversity and pluralism reflects a multicultural, freethinking liberalism that is very congenial to the books' secular, English-speaking audience.

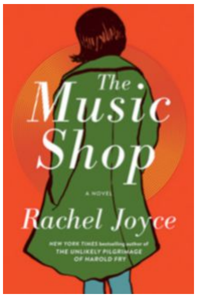
But that liberalism is under several kinds of pressure in our era of rising nationalism and religious extremism. The lessons of Jewish history might look quite different from the vantage point of Tel Aviv or Hebron. Two hundred years from now—and the record suggests that, if humanity still exists in two hundred years, there will be Jews among them—books like Goodman's and Schama's may well seem like products of a world view as remote and mysterious as that of the Sadducees.

Perhaps this constant evolution of the meaning of Jewish history is, in fact, its truest meaning. Hegel wrote, cryptically but influentially, that "the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only at the falling of dusk." In other words, full understanding—traditionally symbolized by Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom—is only possible when a historical phenomenon is concluded, when it has become part of the past. But Jewish history, after three thousand years and against all the odds, is still very much a work in progress. ♦

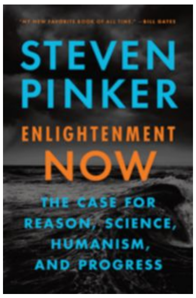
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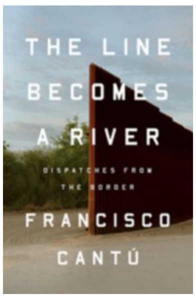
An American Marriage, *by Tayari Jones (Algonquin).* This powerful novel follows a young, upwardly mobile African-American couple in Atlanta as their marriage is falling apart. It's a disaster not of their own making: Roy is accused of, then imprisoned for, a crime he didn't commit. But the injustice of their circumstance doesn't ease the burden. "A marriage is more than your heart, it's your life," his wife, Celestial, writes to him at one point. "And we are not sharing ours." The story, narrated variously by Roy, Celestial, and a friend of Celestial's, is both sweeping and intimate—at once an unsparing exploration of what it means to be black in America and a remarkably lifelike portrait of a marriage. No one is to blame, yet everyone is at fault.



The Music Shop, *by Rachel Joyce (Random House).* Set in England in the late nineteen-eighties, this novel centers on a suburban record store. Its owner is a kind of therapist to his regular customers, choosing records to ease their troubles, from insomnia to infidelity. But, after an encounter with an enigmatic woman, he finds himself in need of music's cure. Unapologetically nostalgic for a time when small shops could flourish and CDs hadn't completely replaced vinyl, the book is saved from total sentimentality by its comic verve and also by its immersion in music: Joyce vividly describes characters transported by a Shalamar beat, a Beethoven sonata, Handel's "Messiah," an Aretha Franklin song.



Enlightenment Now, *by Steven Pinker (Viking).* This passionate defense of the Enlightenment ideals of scientific rationalism and secular humanism argues that human progress is a measurable fact and that the current moment is the best ever. Undernourishment, extreme poverty, and violent crime have fallen worldwide, while literacy rates and the number of laws protecting minorities are on the rise—all of which Pinker credits to the cultivation of science-based research, democratic institutions, and bourgeois virtue. Though he simplifies the Enlightenment into a monolithic set of values and cherry-picks Nietzsche to vilify liberal academics, Pinker's strident optimism could help curb those threats, like climate change, that remain, by encouraging us to discard fatalism and think about solutions.



The Line Becomes a River, *by Francisco Cantú (Riverhead).* The author of this memoir, who grew up in Arizona, near the Mexican border, was always fascinated by the border's paradoxes. After college, he decided to join the U.S. Border Patrol, as "another part of my education." Here he describes learning how to desensitize himself to the harsh realities of the job, as he arrests border crossers, confiscates drugs, and has nightmares about people dying in the desert. For context, Cantú intersperses summaries of writings by Mexican authors and borderland journalists; the effect is lyrical, but unfocussed. When his friend, a Mexican father of three, is deported, Cantú questions his own role in the immigration enforcement system. "What would redemption look like?" he wonders, though by then he knows it's a question he can't answer.

THE CURRENT CINEMA

ISLAND ADVENTURES

"Tomb Raider" and "Isle of Dogs."

BY ANTHONY LANE

If your name is Roar Uthaug, and you want to make movies, and you're too late for the live-action reboot of "The Lion King," what kind of movie should you choose? Not the kind, obviously, where people sit around sipping flat whites and talking about how they really feel. No, you want the new "Tomb Raider," where nobody sits around at all.



In Roar Uthaug's film, Alicia Vikander's Lara Croft is a fighter, not a fantasy.

There have already been two big "Tomb Raider" films, in 2001 and 2003. They starred Angelina Jolie as Lara Croft, the action woman with the kick of an intemperate mule, who mixes the dusty passions of an archeologist with a splash of blue British blood. Jolie has retired from the fray of the franchise, and, in Uthaug's movie, her place is taken by Alicia Vikander. To sum up: we now have a Swedish actress playing an English heroine under the guidance of a Norwegian director. The plot is equally international, racing along as if on a zip line from London to Hong Kong, and thence to a barely reachable island in the Devil's Sea. There, somewhere, is the final resting place of Himiko, "the first queen of Japan," who, if disturbed, will unleash terrors so immeasurable that they could leave the world in direst need of a sequel.

Getting to Himiko is no easy task, but Lara is treading in the footsteps of her father, Richard Croft (Dominic West), who embarked on a similar search seven years ago and has not been seen since. He bequeathed a boxful of maps, puzzles, codes, and clues, more than enough to point Lara in the right direction: "Cross the chasm of souls," "Face the army of a thousand handmaidens," and other household tips. These are a reminder that "Tomb Raider" began life as a video game. The narrative motor of that genre, according to snobs and skeptics, consists of one damn thing after another, but you could say the same of Homer's Odyssey, and, if memory serves, I don't believe Odysseus ever clung to the rusty wing of a crashed bomber as it perched athwart a raging waterfall. But that is what Lara does, and she's just getting started. For her next trick, she must leap to the fuselage when the wing snaps off, and then, as the fuselage crumbles, grab a parachute and glide down through a forest canopy. Pausing briefly to throttle an assailant in a shallow pool, she staggers back to the beach where she first came ashore and begins her adventure anew. No thing is too damn for Lara Croft.

Uthaug's mission is a laudable one: to provide all the fun of a video game while sparing us the risk of chronic thumb fatigue. He is at his best in the watery scenes, when Lara is hurled overboard from a boat that crunches into the island's rocky coast, or, later, is swept downstream in its rapids—no surprise, to anyone who caught the director's previous work, "The Wave" (2015), in which an unsuspecting fjord falls prey to a tsunami. Weirdly, the most boring section of the new film is the actual raiding of the tombs, partly because Lara is dogged by a dreary villain, Vogel (Walton Goggins), who might just pass muster as a henchman, and partly because the obstacles that greet her seem so familiar. Indiana Jones would sigh at the floor whose tiles collapse at random, and, as for the bridge across an abyss, I half expected Lara to meet Gandalf coming the other way. The earlier chunks of the story, in which she hustles around London as a bicycle courier and toughens her skills in the boxing ring, feel fresher and less grandiose, confirming that "Tomb Raider," stuffed though it is with curses, vaults, and locks that cry out for secret keys, is not really about a legendary quest, or family honor. It's about Alicia Vikander.

There is no use in trying to trounce Angelina Jolie on her own turf, and Vikander, wisely, does not make the attempt. Jolie was halfway to a cartoon, as if Rambo had been gene-spliced with Jessica Rabbit, but there is nothing luscious or overheated about the new-look Lara. She wants to be a fighter, not a fantasy, and her feminist credentials are impeccable. Most of the time, she wears an olive singlet and cargo pants; like an Amazon, she is armed with a bow and arrow, for the piercing of pesky men; and, though stirred by filial affection, she requires no romance. This movie is a smooch-free zone, and the arc described by its leading lady, proud and nerveless, is an elegant one: she starts by taking a punch

 ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHANIE SCHOLZ

to the face, without malice, from another woman, and, at the climax, delivers one herself—unmanning her male opponent with a decisive thump to the groin. If Lara Croft weren't already a role model, she is now.

The new Wes Anderson movie, "Isle of Dogs," is, true to its title, all about an island full of dogs. It lies off the coast of Japan, near the fictitious city of Megasaki. The mayor of that harsh metropolis decrees that its canine inhabitants are unfit to mingle with the human ones, being infected with something called "snout fever," which sounds like an outtake from a Bee Gees album. He orders every pooch to be rounded up and transported, on a kind of funicular dumpster, to the island—a wasteland, heaped with mounds of rubbish and jumbles of maggoty food. One of the exiles is Spots, whose owner happens to be the mayor's ward, a boy by the name of Atari (Koyu Rankin). Inconsolable, Atari sets off, at the controls of a spluttering airplane, in search of Spots.

The movie is Anderson's second venture into stop-motion animation, after "Fantastic Mr. Fox" (2009), and, once again, it resounds with famous voices. Among those who speak for the dogs are Bryan Cranston, Liev Schreiber, Scarlett Johansson, Edward Norton, Jeff Goldblum, Tilda Swinton, and, of course, Bill Murray, without whom no Anderson project would be complete. One of the quirks of the tale is that, as we are told at the start, "all barks have been rendered into English," while the Japanese people converse, unsubtitled, in their native tongue. We sense a growing rift between species as well as nations, and, more than once, we hear the plaintive cry "What's happened to man's best friend?"

The plot is densely matted, and it edges toward rebellion, as former pets rise up to teach their masters a lesson. Given the movie's devotion to all things Japanese, it seems odd that, of the various bipeds in the story, the one most responsible for righting wrongs should be Tracy (Greta Gerwig), a freckled American youngster who falls for Atari. Why must it be a Westerner who rides to the rescue? Odder still is the inclusion of a kidney transplant—from one human to another, regrettably, rather than from, say, wolfhound to peke. The reason for this sequence has little to do with the narrative and plenty to do with the overhead viewpoint from which it is filmed, allowing Anderson to divide the screen into clear partitions. Seldom has his appetite for the symmetrical been so extensively sated.

There are two ways of approaching "Isle of Dogs." Fans of the ever-scrupulous Anderson may argue that nowhere is he more at home than with the insane demands of stop-motion, where each hair of the dog, as it bristles with anger or stirs in the breeze, can be arranged from one frame to the next. Other viewers will feel that his habitual style, drawn as tight as a puppet string, is already so firmly tethered that it begs for the presence of tangible actors. The charm of "The Grand Budapest Hotel" (2014) arose from the clash between the geometric rigor of the design and the more impulsive way in which Ralph Fiennes, for example, in the role of the concierge, dashed around firing off curses, beguiling the guests, and changing his plans on the hoof. Life on the paw, in the new movie, lacks that loosening touch. Nothing is open to accident. The director, no less than the mayor, is averse to things that stray.

Still, what a result: a trash-trove of tiny details. Peer closely, amid the island's alps of garbage, and you will spy a cliff face constructed from empty sake bottles. It recalls the dystopian junkscape at the beginning of "Wall-E" (2008), and the moment at which Pixar's robotic hero finds a diamond ring in a box. The precious thingamajig, now useless and worthless, he tosses aside; the handy little box he keeps. That is a beautiful riff, worthy of Chaplin, on the inverted values of a world gone to rot, whereas the gags in Anderson's film are more about themselves, delighting in the literal and the overparticular. "Stop licking your wounds!" a dog instructs his pals, during a pep talk, and we cut to one of them doing exactly that, pausing in mid-lick. Then we have the black-box flight recorder stuck to the underside of Atari's plane, which is helpfully labelled "Black Box." Finally, there are the fights, be they dog-on-dog or mutt-on-man. All we hear is a hosanna of snarls, and all we observe is a flurry of white cotton-wool, studded with whirling limbs. Only in the mind's eye of Wes Anderson could a battle become a cloud. ♦

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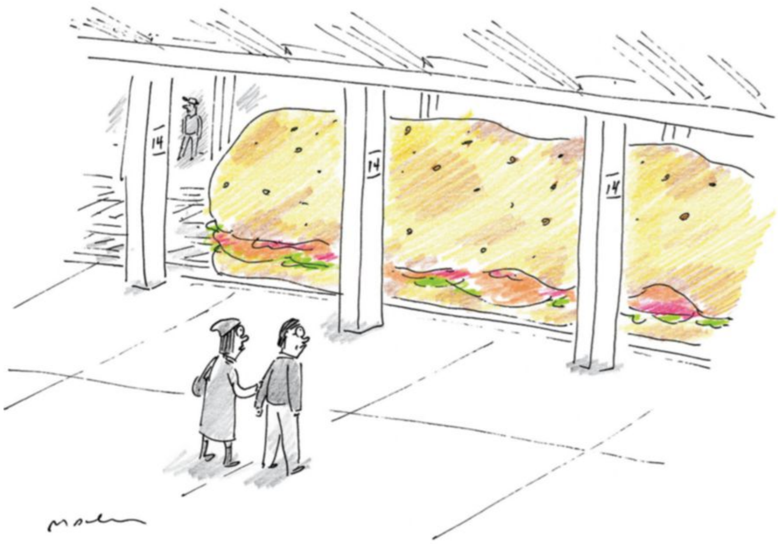
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CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Michael Maslin, must be received by Sunday, March 25th. The finalists in the March 12th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the April 9th issue. Anyone age thirteen or older can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit contest.newyorker.com.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



" .... "

THE FINALISTS



"He touched so many lives."
Colin Yuckman, Morrisville, N.C.

"I was hoping taxes would go first."
Natan Leyva, McLean, Va.

"I guess his work finally caught up with him."
Tulle Hazelrigg, New York City

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Well, you're no masterpiece yourself."
Miles Fowler, Charlottesville, Va.

